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# Office of Education, Division of Intramural Research
# National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
# FELLOWS NEWSLETTER

The Fellows Newsletter is published monthly by the Office of Education, Division of Intramural Research, National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute and distributed to NHLBI DIR members to promote the interest of DIR Fellows.

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## *From the Director of the Office of Education*

Dr. Earl Stadtman, the most senior Investigator at NHLBI, passed away suddenly last Monday. Dr. Stadtman was a giant in his field, who trained many generations of outstanding scientists, amongst them two Nobel Prize winners. We all extend our sympathies to his wife, Dr. Terry Stadtman, who continues the Stadtman tradition at NHLBI, as well as all of his longstanding colleagues who will miss his guidance and friendship. On the next page, you will read a personal tribute to Dr. Stadtman from Gabi Viteri, his postdoctoral fellow. Gabi's essay clearly shows that Earl not only taught his trainees how to do good science, but that he was incredibly dedicated to their success and happiness, the highest form of mentoring that anyone could hope for. We will all miss him.

Earl was a major supporter of the Fellows Retreat, especially the social activities. He truly believed that interacting with others was an important part of science. So I would urge all of you, in that tradition, to register for, attend, and present your research at the Fellows Retreat in March. The registration and abstract submission web site, whose address is given below (and can also be reached from the OE home page on the intranet) is open, with a deadline for registration and abstract submission of **February 15th**. I look forward to seeing you all there.

## *My Postdoc Experience with Earl Stadtman*

by
Gabriela Viteri, Ph.D.

It is hard to describe in words how excited and scared I was three years ago when I was going to meet Earl Stadtman for the first time at the laboratory of Biochemistry in building 50. I had been working before on protein modification and aging in the eye lens and throughout my PhD I had run into his papers. His work in the field had been such an important contribution to the understanding of the aging process that I felt like I was meeting some kind of scientific god. How was I going to talk to him for the first time? How was he going to treat me considering I am a chemist and was not as prepared in the field of Biochemistry as he probably expected? Was he going to assign me a project that I could hardly understand something about? All those questions came to my mind while I walked from the metro station to the lab and I believe I had answers for every single thing I thought he may ask. To my surprise, I found a kind man who asked if I had been able to get an apartment for me and my husband and if I needed anything else to settle in. I was so shocked with this unexpected question that I stood there in front of him with my mouth opened for a few seconds before I could answer. That was the beginning of a journey where I learned not only about science but about life.

Before I came, I knew Earl was "not very young" but I never really counted how many years he may have had according to the dates of the papers I had read from him. I was very surprised when they told me that he and his wife were 84 years old. My only previous experience with senior citizens were my grandparents who are 10 years younger and believe they are too old to keep on going and complain about it all the time. I was so surprised the first time that Earl and I talked about the possible projects I could work on because he could remember the names of so many authors of papers that he mentioned during our conversation as well as the results of the work they had published. After that, every time we discussed something, I took the papers I needed with me to make sure I could mention the author I was talking about (not that he expected that from me, but I did not want to be ashamed of my memory).

Throughout our several informal conversations I discovered a man who had been through a lot of things during his life, good and bad, but always got a positive experience or knowledge from each one of them. He had the special ability to make everyone working with him feel very special and I believe from the bottom of my heart that it was because he considered all of us part of his life and his own personal journey, it was no effort for him to make us feel special, we were special to him.

In just a few days, it was very easy to understand why everyone who worked in this lab admired him so much. He found joy in every single little thing he did and he felt proud of being able to do all that, like taking care of the azaleas in his property, caring for raccoons and other animals that may come up to his house and leaving some food for them, asking me about the results of my experiments and discussing them, or drinking coffee with other lab members while talking to them. He was always very calm and I believe that is what made him so successful in science; he never rushed anything, and waited patiently for me to finish my experiments and confirm if what we suspected was right or not. This way of doing science, step by step but with evidence throughout the process is something that I admire and I am very thankful for having had the opportunity to learn from him.

A picture of Dr. Stadtman and me (Gaby Viteri) at our Christmas party in DC. It was the only picture I ever had with him.

Even though I have learned a lot from my whole postdoctoral experience, I still believe that my greatest wealth from this time is personal; Earl was the most modest, generous and hard working person I have ever met. He loved what he did and he loved NIH very much; I never heard him brag about his awards or achievements, and there are plenty. I never heard him complain about his age and in fact, he lived and worked every single day enjoying what he was doing. He had a lot going on in his life lately regarding the health of his wife and whenever I talked to him, he just expressed concern about her well being. There was never a phrase or

even a word about being upset with the situation or questioning the reasons for things to be the way they were. He loved his wife dearly and I was surprised to know he had declined other opportunities before coming to NIH because they did not give her a chance to pursue her own career; he was a very open minded man for his time and very generous. He always shared what he had with whoever needed it, his knowledge was impressive and he would sit down and talk about things with anyone, you did not "require" a PhD to talk and learn from him.

The most powerful memory of his generosity that comes to my mind occurred during a visit from my parents and sisters from Ecuador. They had asked me to prepare for the whole family a wine and cheese night and I needed some guidance because I am not very much into drinking wine, except a few times when Earl chose a certain wine and told me to taste it. As many of you may know, Earl was very knowledgeable about wine and so he was the expert that I asked for help to give me a list of a few good bottles that I could buy to celebrate that my family came to visit. He told me he would think about that during the weekend and on Monday, to my surprise, I found a bag with bottles of wine that I tried to pay for, but he did not accept. He looked at me and told me he wanted to help me make that night special and I could see in his big blue eyes that he meant it from his heart. I could just give him a hug, thank him for his kindness and tell him that I could find no words to express how deeply his thoughtful detail had touched my life. He definitively made our family evening unforgettable.

Earl was supposed to retire by the end of the month and I wanted to take advantage of that opportunity to thank him for everything he had given to me in these years. I never wanted to do that before because I always prayed that we may have another year with him and did not want to make him feel like I was saying good bye or give him a hint that I may even consider the possibility of him not being with us. I did not get the chance to tell him how special this time in his lab was for me and how much I appreciated the lessons of kindness, generosity, modesty, living life to its fullest and joy and pride for any job you do that I got from him and that is probably what hurt the most the moment I received the news that he passed away. I feel there were so many things left to be said and I will never be able to tell them to him but maybe he knew how deeply he touched every life he came in contact with. I am trying to think that he did not want to hear those things because they may sound like a good bye and he was full of life from his will to keep on going. I am glad he was able to live doing what he liked until the very last minute of his life.

For him, January the 7th was just another day even though for those of us who knew him it was a day of terrible loss and deep sadness. It has been so hard to understand that he won't be coming back and that I won't be able to talk to him anymore that I can hardly imagine what other members of the lab who shared more than 20 years with him or his wife to whom he was married for more than 60 years may be feeling. I feel like the world stopped last Monday at noon when we got the terrible news and ever since, things around me move in slow motion even though for the rest of the world life just keeps going on. I feel that if things move slowly, I have a better chance of seeing him come through the door walking slowly through the hallway to get to his office wearing his black hat and carrying his old grey bag of a meeting he probably attended when I was not even in high school and with that wide smile he always had available for everyone who ever met him.

We had many things in mind to keep working on and they do not make sense to me anymore. Sometimes I think that I should start working even harder and faster as a tribute to his memory but not having him around to discuss our results takes away all my excitement. Then I remember his way of doing things, and I know that if he was around, he would not rush me, he would understand what I feel like and would tell me to take my time and start speeding up my slow motion world little by little when I felt like it. He believed we can only be happy and productive when we were happy inside and he would want that for me.

Probably in a few days, I will be able to put my mind back into my projects knowing that Earl will always come with me and will always be alive in all of those who ever met him, his legacy is incredible. I know people in my lab will give me a hand to get over this tough time and I hope to be there for them too because we learned from Earl to take other people's feelings into account, care sincerely about them and be responsible and rigorous at work. That was the Earl Stadtman way.

## *Jessica's Corner*

I never got the chance to know Dr. Stadtman, but from hearing various people's experiences of him, he seemed to be such a wise, supportive, and uplifting person. I do wish that I had been able to see that spirit in person, but I know that his memory lives on.

I've been told that there will be no funeral service for Dr. S - as neither he nor his wife really wanted that. So to truly honor his works and good deeds, why not pick up where he left off? Why not show a little more patience and kindness to the people who need it most? Why not trust that things will get done and make sure to take the time to make sure they are done right?

Being at the NIH, you get to see and interact with so many different types of amazing people. You get to speak to some truly brilliant scientists and be apart of laboratories with amazing techniques and revolutionary science aims.

But there are also a ton of other people that you get to interact with everyday. They are not scientists, nor do they hold medical or doctorate degrees. But they are still truly amazing individuals. Yes friends, I am talking about your administrative assistants and officers, purchasing agents and tech people.
These people give so much to make sure that your scientific goals are met.

Even I get frustrated with these people when it seems that they are not going as fast as I would like in order to have my needs met. It is difficult to stop, take a breath and realize that they are doing the best they can in the time frame that they are given. We are all always in such a hurry that we can forget our good natured attitudes and humanity - especially when interacting with each other.

So as we all mourn the loss of dear Dr. Stadtman - for not only his scientific achievements - but his kindness of heart and spirit, let's take a bit of his personality with us. Try spreading a little sunshine as you walk and talk. I think Dr. Stadtman is a great example that proves that you can achieve greatness without sacrificing generosity, compassion, or the well being of others.

*"And if we all could spread a little sunshine, all could think before we strike, we all would, be a little closer to the world we'd like." - Fastrada from Broadway Musical Pippin*

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## Get Ready for RETREAT 2008!!
## March 13-14, 2008
## Loews Annapolis Hotel

**Speakers Include:**

- Dr. Katherine A. High, Bennett Professor of Pediatrics & HHMI Investigator, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
- Dr. Nina V. Fedoroff, Science & Technology Adviser to the Secretary of State, US Department of State
- Dr. Napoleone Ferrara, Genentech Fellow
- Alumni Career Presentations by Drs. Martin Crook (Merck) & Cynthia Ju (University of Colorado)

**New this year:**

- Guests allowed! (at a separate cost)
- Walking Tour of Annapolis

**Register Today!**
**http://dir-intranet.nhlbi.nih.gov/oe/abstractsubmission**

**Other Retreat Features:**

- TWO Scientific Poster Sessions
- Platform Talks by NHLBI Fellows and Alumni
- NHLBI Mentoring Awards (Nominations available online!)
- Fellows Poster Awards (Winners get a stipend increase!)
- The Return of Late Night Karaoke!

## New NHLBI Fellows

**Michael Lerner, Ph.D.** is a new postdoc in the Laboratory of Computational Biology under the mentorship of Dr. Richard Pastor. He received his Ph.D. In Biophysics from the University of Michigan. While at the NHLBI, Dr. Lerner will be working on the incorporation of multi-scale modeling techniques into CHARMM.

**Jose Nevado** is a recent predoctoral fellow in the Translational Medicine Branch under the mentorship of Dr. Manfred Boehm. He will receive his Ph.D. In Molecular Biology and Biotechnology from the Universiy of the Philippines. While at the NHLBI, he will be working on endothelial cell biology.

**Susanta Sarkar, Ph.D.** is a recent fellow in the Laboratory of Molecular Biology under the mentorship of Dr. Keir Neuman. He received his Ph.d. In Physics from the University of Oregon. While at the NHLBI, Dr. Sarkar will be working on single molecule study of DNA unwinding by E coli. RecQ helicase.

## Recent Publications by NHLBI Fellows


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