

Albrecht Fleckenstein

The recent death of Albrecht Fleckenstein at his home in Germany has caused his colleagues and friends throughout the world not only to mourn his death but also to remember the great achievements of this outstanding and sometimes formidable scholar. Certainly he was, and always will be, the “father of calcium antagonists.” There can be no doubt about this, but in many ways he contributed far more to the field of cardiac physiology and pharmacology than the recognition of this new class of drugs. He was amongst the first to recognize the significance of the “calcium overloading” phenomenon. He was equally at the forefront of those who were probing the consequences of energy depletion. More recently, together with Gisa, he initiated many of the primary studies dealing with the cellular events involved in atherosclerosis. For these and many other investigations, Albrecht was honored throughout the world. Of equal, and often unrecognized, importance was his interest in fostering the careers of his more junior colleagues.

My first encounter with Albrecht was in the 1960s, at a meeting devoted to prenylamine. I remember well how we were a minority of two in arguing that this drug was not a beta-blocker! That meeting was held in Capri, and it started my long association and friendship with Albrecht. We had some memorable discussions, sometimes with great gusto and in public, as, for example, at a meeting in Paris where we argued over the appropriate terminology for the drugs Albrecht had named *calcium antagonists*. Some of us thought the alternative of *calcium channel blocker* might be more appropriate. On being asked why he



thought the term *calcium antagonist* was more appropriate, Albrecht won the day by saying, with great honesty and simplicity, that it was because he thought of that designation!

Albrecht was a great scholar and a formidable scientist. In addition, he was a trusted colleague and friend whom we all miss. My own thoughts, of course, go to Gisa and their three young daughters; in some ways they are fortunate in having shared so many happy and triumphant years with Albrecht, for they, too, shared in his success and honors. Without them I doubt if he would have been the great scholar he was.

Winifred G. Nayler