

Nico M. van Gelder (1933–2005)

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Nico was a gift to the American Society for Neurochemistry more than almost anyone I knew, who has contributed to our understanding of GABA and its function in the nervous system.

It is paradoxical that Nico's lovely wife, Louise, was my classmate at McGill University long before I knew him. The son of highly educated civil servants in Indonesia, Nico spent the war years in a Japanese camp much like a German camp I spent my war years in. I don't mean to make this read like a CV for a ROI for that's boring and is public knowledge.

Nico got his Ph.D. with K.A.C. Elliott at McGill University followed by a stint in Boston with Steve Kuffler and he returned to The University of Montreal as an Associate Professor and was promoted to full Professor shortly thereafter.

Memories are the currency of our hearts and souls and Nico has blessed us with rich memories as a scholar, a gifted educator, and a warm human being.

One of his main passions in life was the teaching of graduate students and he did this in a most unusual and gifted manner.

Nico was always concerned that the understanding of GABA in the nervous system depends, to a large extent, on understanding its role in localization. Parenthetically, the micro assay for GABA originally developed by Richard McCaman was based on the methodology devised by Nico, and I must confess to being guilty of having used it for looking at levels of GABA in cerebrospinal fluid as a function of traumatic brain injury.

Nico collaborated with Anders Hamberger in Gottenborg, where he devised a formulation for the treatment of migraines, which was aimed at manipulating GABA levels. The name of that compound was

Amigran, and regretfully he could not get FDA approval because it was considered a drug.

In a symbol of generosity, whatever little money Nico got from Amigran he shared generously with a number of his colleagues, including myself, whose only contribution was to provide a forum for discussion.

More than anything else, Nico loved to teach and his favorite mode of teaching was to drink with his students and to spend the whole night having friendly discussions.

Nico's research interests extended beyond GABA and he was passionately involved in the role of taurine in nutrition. I remember many nights spent with Nico and students at the Boris Drujan Center for Neurochemistry in Caracas and to this day, van Gelder is a revered name amongst students in that institution.

These, I think, are some of the highlights of a distinguished research and educational career. He published widely and was a valued member of a large number of prestigious editorial boards in the Neuroscience literature.

We bid you au revoir, Nico, and we will miss you very much.

Bernard Haber

Nico, a fine editor of this journal for ten years, was a constructive influence, an enthusiastic teacher, a cheerful counselor, a fine thinker and researcher, who genuinely loved research for its own sake, to advance knowledge rather than for personal profit, a noble soul and a good friend; turning to him one always received warm help and support.

His death is a loss to many, to the field and to me personally.

Abel Lajtha