

## OBITUARY

### Claudio Barros, PhD (1936-2008)

Claudio Barros loved life. He passed away on October 27th, 2008. He was an outstanding human being. Probably because of that he was also an outstanding teacher and scientific researcher. All of us –who had the privilege of knowing him– feel today extremely sad for his unexpected dead. All of us –who had the opportunity of learning from him– feel intensely that he is not really dead. According to some religious traditions, a man that left a place forever also left behind several clues that reminds his own gestures, his way of thinking and acting, of living his own life. In other words, the person is not really gone: He lives in every one of us who had the fortune of growing along a great human being. According to my humble point of view Dr. Barros will live forever in everyone who loved and respected him because all of us are, to some extent, Dr. Barros himself. We all have a way of looking at science, education and life. Today I continue doing things, and utilizing sayings, that were borrowed directly from Dr. Barros. In a very precise sense he lives, and will continue living, in every gesture that comes directly from him.

Since he was a child he was deeply involved with living creatures. In fact, by the time was a fellow at his lab, back in 1990, every time we had the opportunity –a meeting, a scientific encounter, a simple barbecue at his home in the beautiful coast of his beloved country, Chile– he surprised me by getting with him an small box full of little instruments and bottles with several fluids. It was so just in case we found unexpectedly something worth getting back to the lab. I suspect that, at least in part, biology was for him something that had a lot of things in common with games. Of course, games in the way a child understand a game: The most serious thing in the entire world. During my two years in his lab –my most important years from a scientific point of view– it was plainly clear for me that we were playing instead of working. Of course, part of our work was to convince other people that we were really working very hard. That not to say that he was not able of working very hard. All the contrary: I never knew a person so able of spending uncountable hours at the lab doing whatever was necessary to finish an experiment, finding an answer, getting a last minute micrograph or so. I never knew a person so enthusiastic regarding any of his tasks, even the less appealing –the ever hated and ever growing paperwork that comes with age and responsibility, just to mention one of them–. He was a demanding coaching for sure. But he was more demanding on himself than with any other person, meaning a fellow, a colleague, a technical person of the staff and so on.

He graduated from the Pontifical Catholic University, Chile, in 1960. After that he obtained his PhD at Tulane University in 1968. Among his numerous positions he was Visiting Scientist in the Department of Biology at the University of Houston and the Medical Research Council, UK; also President of the Iberoamerican Society for Cell Biology and Vice President of the International Federation of Cell Biology. He was honoured as Official Guest, National University of Tucumán, Argentina; University of Hawaii, Honorary Research Fellow at University College, London; University of Houston, Texas, Honor Guest at the Universidad Nacional of Río Cuarto, Argentina; Member of the Argentinian Society of Biology; Fellow of the Latin American Academy of Sciences; Fellow of the Third World Academy of Sciences, Professor Honoris Causa, Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos and Universidad Ricardo Palma, Lima, Perú. From the very beginning he had the chance to work with the most respected researchers on the field of reproductive biology, including Dr. C. R. Austin and Dr. R. Yanagimachi. He was also responsible of making unvalued contributions to his field of work: His work showing that the mammalian oocyte and the spermatozoon fuse together side by side was published in the Journal of Cell Biology, accounting for more than 400 citations. His work, dealing with the reproductive biology of mammals, invertebrates, gamete cryopreservation, among others, is greatly acknowledge among his colleagues, and accounted as a whole for more than 2000 citations. He worked intensively in the formation of many young trainees, many of them established researchers today in several places all around the world, mainly in his beloved continent, Latin America.

Unfortunately, he knew well what was like dealing with a cruel and extremely painful disease: A prostate cancer. He fought his disease with courage and determination to finally defeating it and live for many years to come. On the other hand, he was fortunately enough to found what he called a latent vocation to serve Christ. Regarding this point, he worked as hard as he worked as a scientist, until getting –after five years of demanding studies– his cleric ranking of deacon of the Catholic Church. Since then and dedicated as always to his family –his wife Gloria, his daughter Yoyi and his son Claudio Jr, and his 7 grandchildren– he also devoted himself to help people seriously ill. Finally, and conscious of the importance of the youngsters, he spend a lot of his time teaching science to boys and girls from several places in Chile.

To finish this obituary I would like to say that many of us will remember him for as long as we could remember. That may of us will continue doing his little gestures and adopting many of his ways of doing things. And also, when our own time comes, there will be a lot more people who will continue doing the same things without even acknowledge that they are repeating what once was done for a generous, dedicated, talented and loving person named Claudio Barros. A person who loved life.

*(In his dear Memory from all of us, in the hope that he will live forever)*

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