Obituary

Arthur Yuwiler

Arthur Yuwiler once wrote that “in contrast to claims that art and science are two separate antithetical ways of approaching the world … they are, at base, the same”. He was the best example of such a synthesis, a true Renaissance-type humanist, brilliant scientist, creative artist and world traveler. Arthur was a real genius who at heart was a child. He wanted to know the answer to every question. A charter member (and Fellow) of ACNP, he was also a member of many other scientific societies. Arthur’s scientific career was affiliated mostly with UCLA with the exception of four years at the Mental Health Research Institute at the University of Michigan where he met Sam Gershon who had just arrived with his wife and very young child in Ann Arbor during the winter months. It looked pretty bleak and lonesome. However, with Arthur as their guide, companion and warm friend things began to look better and more importantly, felt better. Since Sam Gershon had come from Australia and had done some very early work with lithium, Art decided they should start from there. Art was in charge of biochemistry and Sam, pharmacology. They tackled this small project and published a joint paper "The Psychopharmacological Specificity of the Lithium Ion", the very first introduction of lithium to USA.

Dr. Yuwiler was Chief of the Neurobiochemistry Research Laboratory, at West Los Angeles Veteran Affairs Medical Center, and after his retirement from the VA, a very active member of the Brain Research Institute at UCLA (where he started as a post-doc in 1956). His research interests were mostly dedicated to methoxyindoles pathway of tryptophan metabolism including seminal observations of serotonin and melatonin relation to stress, autism and violence. He co-authored a comprehensive epidemiological study of melatonin (with L. Wetterberg). Arthur was a natural teacher with a rare ability to explain difficult ideas in a clear and understandable way for a wide audience. In 2000, Arthur (with his longtime friend and colleague, Dr. Lennart Wetterberg) published “Guide to Psychiatric Research”. Based on a series of research methodology seminars for medical students, this book presented a discursive and thought-provoking approach, spiced up with anecdotes from the history of medical research. Arthur made unique and beautiful art works in a variety of mediums: drawing, painting and wood sculpture. He made a wooden “Indian tote” which is in his living room. It represents his family: Alice, his wife of 61 years, their three children and five grandchildren. His art objects were also compiled in a book “The Art of Art” published just two years ago. Art and Alice travelled all over world, usually avoiding the tourist itineraries. Arthur was a kind and caring person, always ready to help his colleagues with his time and research collaboration. When his younger colleagues complained about difficulties they experienced, he always offered a solution or, at least, warm support. The sincerity, warmth and hospitality of Arthur and Alice made the US experience, easier and even more productive for many overseas colleagues, like we were. His qualities of scientific enquiry, his generosity in all aspects of his life, his honesty and sincerity will be remembered by all his friends and colleagues. He was a true friend, and we will always miss him.

Samuel Gershon, Miami, FL, USA
lislgershon@hotmail.com

Gregory Oxenkrug, Boston, MA, USA
goxenkrug@tuftsmedicalcenter.org