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DIRETORIA DE TRATAMENTO DA INFORMAÇÃO

Cidade Universitária Zeferino Vaz Barão Geraldo

CEP 13083-970 – Campinas SP

Fone: (19) 3521-6493

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Editorial

Prof. Dr. Geraldo Gomes de Freitas

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I remember as if it were yesterday. It was in the afternoon, and the night still was distant - one of those afternoons of my life, in September, 1970. I was arriving at the Colégio Americano Batista in Recife, and there I met Geraldo putting the finishing touches on the VIII Brazilian Congress of Rheumatology. In the General Meeting at the VII Congress in Sao Paulo, Geraldo submitted the city of Recife as a candidate, not without being challenged by some of those present, as opposed to other people, resolutely supportive of his proposal. Recife was also endorsed by Professor Jacques Houli, a scholar with a very respectable scientific prestige at the time, and, therefore, with the frank support of others, among whom I was included.

Alone and very tired, Geraldo took me by the arm, led me with him to Olinda and there, in a folkloric "pai-de-santo" bar, among crabs, billfish and sips of spirits ("cachaça"), a friendship was born that would last a lifetime, not only as colleagues, but as true brothers in the words of my father, who publicly, in celebration of his 80 years, said to all friends and relatives who were present, that he considered Geraldo as one of his sons. It was in that distant afternoon too, with the political force that always characterized Geraldo, that he began to build my destiny, however pretentious, helping to present the city of Campinas as a candidate to host the next Congress. And indeed that city was the headquarters of the X Brazilian Congress of Rheumatology in 1974 after the IX Congress in Curitiba, elected for the year of 1972. As a prize, at that time a custom was always honoured: to deliver to the President of Congress the command of the Society, and it fell to me to govern it in the period 1974-1976. The command for the subsequent biennium, for the first time disconnected from the Congress, was delivered to Professor Luiz Verstmann.

This occurrence didn't cool off his mood. Geraldo was one of those men who could lose the battle but not the war, and was there in Curitiba where he nurtured my election as President of the Congress and of the Society. In a reconnaissance trip by the South regional offices, Geraldo was shocked with the Sociedade Paulista de Reumatologia situation, whose president, Dr. Arantes, was not a rheumatologist, but a phys-

iatrist. Geraldo's indignation about it was immense, and as President of SBR did everything he could to remove the physiatrist of his responsibility. And then Dr. William Habib Chahade was elected President of Sao Paulo Regional Office, and this was the starting point for a whopping rebirth of Sociedade Paulista de Reumatologia, thanks to his highly entrepreneurial spirit, an outstanding brand of his scientific and societal aspirations, that persists until our days. I do remember when, in Curitiba, Geraldo told his friend, "Chahade, do lead this movement and I will assume its paternity." Also in this city, a friendly competition between me and Dr. Castor Cobra was taking place. With the casting vote of the chairman of the meeting, Dr. Wilson Cossermelli, I became the winner by 8 x 7 votes. In the SBR meeting, the next step was to prevail against the other candidate in my defence to the city of Fortaleza be hostess for the X Brazilian Congress of Rheumatology.

Thereafter Geraldo never stopped, in Brazil and abroad, and it would be for me too exhausting to list all the achievements, academic and societal, of that man nicknamed the Lion of North-Northeast. But at present, some of them merit citation. With his help, I was elected a vocal member of Pan American League of Associations for Rheumatology (PANLAR) to South America. Along with Uruguay, Argentina and Chile, Geraldo founded the Congress (and after Committee) of the Southern Cone. He was President of SBR and amongst all his administrative efforts, placed great emphasis on rheumatology and made this discipline recognized by the Ministry of Education as a matter of compulsory education in medical schools (with one exception, the discipline of rheumatology at Medicine School, Federal University of Goiás, under request by Professor Jacob Gamarski, Secretary General of Panlar). Under his command, never in the history of Pan-American rheumatology the correspondence was as intense as his; and Geraldo has not lost sight of the promotion of our Society. At that time, He received not one PANLAR paper in its itinerant seat, and four years later we did pay excess baggage to the U.S.A. for its transportation to the next PANLAR gestors. He was also president of Brazilian Academy of Rheumatology.

Workshops, conferences (including the Pan-American Congress in 1990 in Recife), participations, direct or indirect, in the foundation of all North-Northeast regional offices, and invitations to international celebrities to further strengthen our bonds of friendship suffice to grant him the title of one of the great entrepreneurs of Brazilian rheumatology of all time.

In academic life, his contribution was no less important. He attended very early the School of Medicine, Federal University of Pernambuco, but not before an internship during two years in Rio de Janeiro with Professor Jacques Houli, a scientist widely respected by us all rheumatologists, as I already said.

Geraldo's doctorate in the old Chair of Clinical Therapeutics revealed (like all who were familiar with that comprehensive rheumatologic culture at that time) his deep observational and investigational spirit, in the decision about which was more effective in a painful shoulder – radiotherapy or glucocorticoids, one of his research lines. With such persistence, Geraldo progressed step by step throughout his entire academic career to reach the level of full professor at that university. Finally, Geraldo must have stopped his activities, I thought... Instead, he submitted, as a thesis for a concourse, an exhaustive experimental study on local effects of gluco-

corticoids in Wistar rats, a controlled trial. He only missed being Director of the college where he studied; however, Geraldo was appointed Professor Emeritus, as a crowning of all his great accomplishments.

My brother, my friend: I do know that only a tiny bit of my memory was stirred with the mountain of achievements that it still has about you, but I am glad I did not wake it. "Longing is a pain that hurts and devours our heart", in the words of Raimundo Correia. So I preferred to let my soul speak a little of everything I know about you. Last but certainly not least, let me say that those who, like me, had the privilege of living on your time and in your company, have for you the same feelings of the highest esteem, respect and consideration. In fact, my friend, you not only deserve, but also ennoble and mainly dignifies this tribute in its highest human, scientific, societal meaning. May God, in His infinite kindness, bless you today and always.

Adil Muhib Samara
Universidade Estadual de Campinas (UNICAMP), Campinas, SP,
Brazil

E-mail: amsamara@uol.com.br (A.M. Samara).