Boris Albini

1943–2000

Boris Albini, a previous member of the Editorial Board of *International Archives of Allergy and Immunology* and a longtime friend and colleague of myself, died in Buffalo, N.Y., on June 20, 2000, at his home after a long and insidious illness. Boris was born on March 7, 1943, in Zagreb, Croatia, and after having spent part of his youth with his parents in Israel, Venezuela, and then finally in Vienna, Austria, he graduated both, in medicine and music at the University of Vienna. He also studied Romance languages and the history of theater. In addition to his scientific achievements, Boris was an accomplished pianist, composer, painter and playwright, works of whom have been performed in the Vienna Konzerthaus and published repeatedly in the prestigious Austrian daily newspaper *Die Presse*, respectively.

From this brief list it becomes clear that having Boris as a colleague and friend went far beyond our common professional interest, i.e. the field of immunology. Boris joined me as my first postdoctoral fellow after my return to Vienna from a three-year stay at the Department of Immunology and Microbiology and the Center for Immunology, respectively, in the laboratory of the late Ernest Witebsky in Buffalo, N.Y. Upon my return to Vienna the cooperation, intellectual stimulation and good humor of Boris were instrumental for establishing my own group, which was soon enlarged by several other postdocs, students and technicians, forming a competent nucleus devoted to autoimmunity in general and investigations of the spontaneously occurring autoimmune thyroiditis in the obese strain (OS) of chickens, in particular. The postdoctoral fellows in addition to Boris included, e.g., Konrad Schauenstein, now Professor and Chairman in Graz, Austria, Roy Sundick, now Professor in Detroit, Mich. and many others.

It may well be that I assign a certain sentimental gloriole to this period of our professional life at the Institute for General and Experimental Pathology (Pathophysiolo-

gy) at the University of Vienna Medical School. My laboratory consisted of one rather small room that was crammed full with people and equipment. Space was scarce, and since Boris was the tallest of us, he decided to use the top of a large refrigerator as his main and undisturbed lab bench. We soon published our data in journals such as *Nature*, *Journal of Immunology*, as well as *International Archives of Allergy and Applied Immunology*, and we also presented our data on the interesting and unique OS model at many national and international meetings. With respect to the latter, I remember our adventurous trips to the far east of Czechoslovakia to the little hidden castle of Hrubá Skála, where our colleagues from the Czech Academy of Sciences, a group headed by the late Milan Hašek, the discoverer of the phenomenon of inborn immune tolerance, organized a series of meetings on 'avian immunol-

ogy'. These were in the times of the cold war, and traveling to these conferences and meeting our colleagues was difficult and not without risk, especially for our friends from the former eastern block. In addition to the fact that Boris was always able to present exciting new data, his knowledge of Slavic languages was of great help for these encounters. I also remember a trip to one of the meetings of the European Federation of Immunological Societies (EFIS) that took place in Zagreb, Boris' hometown, where we not only experienced a high-class conference, but also witnessed the cultural highlights of the beautiful coast of Istria on our way down as well as the city of Zagreb itself.

Scientifically, Boris was engaged in one of the first analyses in the literature that dealt with the phenotypic identification of B and T cells using specific antibodies that were produced in our laboratory, a task for which the chicken was, of course, an ideal system. He also demonstrated that an enigmatic organ located behind the eye bulb of the chicken, the Harderian gland, interestingly represents a peripheral deposit of pure B cells and plasma cells, respectively. Finally, Boris became an expert in immunofluorescence technology, and together with Fritz Herzog we tested and introduced a variety of new filter combinations for this purpose. In the early 1970s, Boris acted as an instructor at our Postgraduate Immunofluorescence Technology Courses in Vienna that were supported by the World Health Organization (WHO). When I was appointed Professor and Chairman of Pathophysiology and Immunology in Innsbruck, Boris agreed to join me and to establish a laboratory of immunohistology at this new location applying conventional histological techniques, immunohistology and immuno-electron microscopy. In order to be trained in the latter, Boris went as a postdoc to the laboratory of Giuseppe Andres at the State University of New York at Buffalo, who earlier had developed the ferritin-labelling technique. Boris was planning to return to Innsbruck two years later. However, for family reasons, he decided to stay in Buffalo, but we remained in close contact since Boris spent several sabbaticals in Innsbruck sharing his deep knowledge of immunology with us and our students. For example, he introduced us to working with SCID mice and to the field of immunology of the oral cavity, both topics that have proven to be of continued interest to us since.

In Buffalo, Boris was named a Buswell Fellow in 1975, and already a year later he joined the faculty of the Department of Microbiology and Immunology as an Assistant Professor. There, his research focussed on a wide range of autoimmune diseases, including lupus erythema-

tosus, systemic chronic serum sickness, and other conditions related to kidney disease.

He was named a Fulbright Scholar in 1991 and his service to the University of Buffalo included the membership on the Medical School's Admission Committee, the Faculty Council and the University's Faculty Senate. He was a member of the Ernest Witebsky Center for Immunology at the University of Buffalo and was the President of the Buffalo Collegium of Immunology at the time of his death. Boris was the author or coauthor of more than 140 scientific publications and served as an Associate Editor or member of the Editorial Boards of several peer-reviewed journals, including *International Archives of Allergy and Immunology*.

A compassionate, gentle and generous man, mindful of victims of the ongoing conflict in the Balkans, Boris travelled to Bosnia three years ago under the auspices of International Medical Relief of Western New York. His mission included continuing the organization's efforts to improve medical care and education and to gather information critical in obtaining funds for the program. His multilingual fluency as well as his scientific and medical expertise were considered invaluable for the organization's success.

For me, Boris was most probably the most educated, gentle and considerate person that I have ever met. Working with Boris was not only an intellectual pleasure, but he was the incarnation of a state of mind and a way of living, i.e. humanism and universality, that seems to have vanished from our society in general and the scientific community in particular. Having Boris as a colleague and friend made everybody aware that culture consists of science *and* art, and that working in the environment of a laboratory together with other devoted, hardworking and intelligent colleagues, is a special privilege that makes our profession so unique.

Boris is survived by his wife Christine, a pediatrician and endocrinologist, his two sons, Thomas and Paul, and his mother Maja.

We will miss you, Boris, and it is difficult to accept that we will never again be able to engage in discussions with you on the topics of B cell function, complement activation, triple staining immunofluorescence techniques, and the immunogenicity of oral bacteria, intermingled with citation of the beauty of the sculptures of the Croatian artist Mestrović, the performance of Bach piano concerts by Svatoslav Richter, and discussions about the large Boston Public Garden Sketch Book by Morris Prendergast.

Georg Wick, Innsbruck