

Prolog to Special Issue

ON MARCH 8–10, 2004, former and present students and colleagues of Dr. Erminio Costa gathered in Rome, Italy, to pay tribute to his 80th birthday and his many contributions to neuroscience. The organizing committee for the event consisted of Drs. G. L. Gessa, M. L. Barbaccia, L. Manara, M. Massotti, F. Moroni, G. Toffano, and M. Trabucchi.

On the evening of March 8, a special ceremony was held in the Pignatelli palace, where Dr. Costa was awarded the Alkmeon International Prize 2004. The prize was instituted by Prof. G. Nistico, also a member of the current European Parliament, after Alkmeon who lived about the 5th or 4th century BC and was the first to advocate that the brain was the site of the spirit. Professors R. Levi-Montalcini (also a former recipient of the Alkmeon Prize), G. L. Gessa and G. Nistico gave moving presentations of the many contributions of Dr. Costa to science and the training of scientists that spanned over half a century. The legacy of Dr. Costa lies in his enormous capacity to touch the brains and souls of his students. This unique attribute of Mimo was alive and powerfully felt during this simple and touching ceremony. Following the presentation, the participants were treated to cocktails and a viewing of the beautiful paintings by Eugenio Galiano. The assembled participants then walked to the Grand Hotel de la Minerve, led by Drs. Garattini and Costa walking arm in arm on the wet cobblestone streets of Rome, for an elegant banquet. The evening was a joyous and memorable occasion. The dinner was delicious, the wine excellent, and the room sated with laughter and memories of a life well spent.

On March 9–10 friends, students, and colleagues of Dr. Costa gathered in the Sala del Cenacolo in the Chamber of Deputies Montecitorio of the Italian Parliament. There, the Italian Society of Pharmacology sponsored the symposium *Neuroscience in the Third Millennium: A Tribute to Mimo Costa*. The chamber was grand, murals at each end, and with magnificent paintings on the ceiling. It was filled to capacity, with many attendees standing along the sides and rear of the room. The meeting was opened by the Honorable G. Fioroni, followed by Professor R. Levi-Montalcini, and ended by a presentation by the President of the Italian Society of Pharmacology, Professor G. L. Gessa.

The first session was chaired by Drs. G. L. Gessa, L. Manara, and G. Toffano and was dedicated to *The Contributions of Mimo Costa to the Development of Neuropsychopharmacology*. Distinguished scientists enumerated the scientific achievements of Dr. Costa and recalled memorable moments from their interactions and meetings with him. Then, former colleagues and students of Dr. Costa presented *Working with Mimo Costa*. Each one told his story, refreshed our memories, reminded us of our shared days and dreams, and replenished our souls with brotherhood and friendship. The presentations were a splendid tribute to Mimo. He touched the lives of many scientists, and his contributions to neuroscience were enormous.

The day closed with Dr. Costa presenting the Lectura Magistralis, *Schizophrenia: A GABAergic Disorder*. Dr. J. Flaherty, Chair Department of Psychiatry University of Illinois at Chicago, introduced him. Although Mimo may be graying, his drive and enthusiasm for research were as strong as ever. He has always been a dreamer and a pioneer, and this spirit consumed and saturated the Sala del Cenacolo. In the evening the participants were invited to the restaurant Alfredo 1907, where the dish Fettuccine all' Alfredo originated. Old friendships were renewed, and the good old days were remembered once more.

On Wednesday, there were two sessions titled *Hot Spots in Neuroscience at the Beginning of the Third Millennium: Contributions by Mimo Costa's Alumni*. Drs. M. L. Barbaccia, D.-M. Chuang, A. R. Green, and N. H. Neff chaired the first session. Drs. J. Davis, A. Guidotti, S. H. Koslow, and M. Massotti chaired the second session. The speakers began by recalling the research they did while students in Dr. Costa's laboratory. Many had amusing stories and photographs of events and colleagues they met at Saint Elisabeth's. Then they proceeded to present their current research and achievements. The "students" were again presenting their research as they did at "Monday morning meetings." They stood respectfully in front of Dr. Costa, but they spoke with strong voices and confidence. Mimo did not hesitate to provide his evaluation of the presentations. Ageless Mimo, your spirit and energy continue to guide us all.

Norton H. Neff, PhD