

Eduardo Santini Araujo, M.D.



I met Eduardo when I was a medical student at the Buenos Aires University Medical School.

The scene was the Pathology Department at the “Juan A. Fernández” Hospital. At that time at such center there was a professorship that was in charge of the one remembered by us all, Prof. Mauricio Rapaport, at the time contemporary with my father. The course was intensive; we were 11 so-called “commendable” students.

Somehow, we led parallel university lives: he was assistant professor at the Pathology Chair I was attending (if I’m not mistaken he was near graduation with outstanding marks by the end of that year). In turn, I had entered the Anatomy Second Chair competing for an “ad honorem” assistant position.

At the auditorium a mural would stand out—“Death teaches us what life hide from us”.

Rapaport was acknowledged as a man of special intelligence; such quality shows in him surrounding himself by brilliant colleagues. Eduardo was aligned as from youth in academic bright with his senior colleagues, most of whom were as time went by Chiefs of Departments and, in turn, Professors.

Rapaport had chosen correctly!!! Eduardo used to love what he did: clear in his theoretical explanations, precise in his microscopic descriptions, simple in his macroscopic deliveries.

I am color-blinded for some color ranges. As soon as my course started, I let Eduardo know it; therefore, he guided me into the identification of cell shapes, location of nucleus, and tissue disposition. He taught me how to get into the wonderful intimate weave of organs and tissues. What he did is very difficult, only few can, I’m positive about it out of some 40-year personal experience teaching morphologic sciences. The anecdote I’ve just related allows me to state that, at that time, Eduardo showed he was gifted, something that he did throughout his career. It seemed it was him who was included in the histological picture itself.

Until just recently I kept professional links with Eduardo, especially as a referent in second-opinion consultations. It was easy, as his Pathology fellows used to hold him in high esteem and, this, we could easily see.

At the Austral University Hospital we shared the Surgical Room in cases of complex prosthetic revisions with dubious clinical histories. Therefore, the WBC count was not the only thing that had to be investigated in the surgical pieces: “take that flat on the right of the scalpel tip”; “I see less than five WBCs, but there are hyper-vascular and purulent areas with detritus; I advise you to implant the spacer”.

Eduardo used to say that he, as a pathologist, was supposed to be a “precision gunner”. Thus he exemplified it: “A Report as the following is no admissible: There are not malignant cells to be seen but, if there are, they are few”.

With my colleagues at the Austral University Hospital we shared with Eduardo a wonderful academic experience: It was a collaborative course with the International Academy of Pathology. At that time two outstanding figures in the Pathology and Surgery of muscle-skeletal tumors were with us: his dear friend Franco Bertoni and the well-remembered Mario Mercuri. One of the activities was remarkably original: with Diego Mengelle and Walter Parizzia the previous day we had pretended intra-bone and intra-muscle lesions, mimicking tumors; then we would carry out imaging studies.

The course attendants, orthopedists and pathologists, elaborated the likely and the differential diagnoses. Franco, Eduardo and Mario would define the discussion of the cases. Then Mario operated on as the surgery was broadcast to the classroom; a frozen section procedure was simulated, and Franco and Eduardo projected the typical microscopic images. Once the piece had been removed, Franco would analyze the margins and insisted that what really got on his nerves was to receive at his Lab at the Rizzoli Institute surgical pieces split across the middle. At the end of a wonderful academic day we were starving; we went on a camaraderie dinner for some potato chips and fried eggs (which was the fastest they managed to offer us); to Franco and Mario this was unknown: “*Ma, questo come si mangia?*” The answer was ready: “*Così!!*”. Paying homage to the “precision gunner”, Eduardo buried the end of one potato chip in the middle of a yolk impeccably cooked. Then Franco and Mario joined him in several more rounds of “patate con uova”.

We shared with Eduardo the taste for classical music, especially opera, and particularly Wagnerian pieces. When we got together to write some work or a chat about some patients’ diagnoses, not infrequently we got tempted and shifted the session focus toward the world of the music-addicts. Walkirias would beat onion bulb reactions and pathological fractures would cheerfully play with Isolde’s Death, perhaps like the paranormal expression of a good omen.

Dr. Liliana Olvi, an outstanding and faithful Eduardo’s collaborator, highlighted some of the most remarkable traits of his personality with the following self-definition: “I’ve got kindergarten and bone pathology”. I personally like this quote, since in interpersonal relationships Eduardo managed as simply as child and, throughout his professional career he gave to us surgeons the precision we needed for our patients.

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