

Karl Lederis
1920-2007



Born in Noreikoniai, Lithuania on August 1, 1920, Karl was destined for shores his parents, Paul and Franciska, could not have imagined. For Karl, an academic life began early on, with certification at the Siauliai Teachers college (1939), followed by a brief teaching career. However, World War II soon intervened and the German draft claimed his services. Although perhaps not appreciated as good fortune at the time, fate stepped in for him to be captured by the British, who not only recognized his talent as an interpreter in the Prisoner of War Camp, but also facilitated Karl's subsequent move to Bristol, where he met Hildegard, his beloved wife of many years and mother to his two children, Aldona and Edmund, born in Bristol.

In Bristol, Karl also found a key research mentor, Hans Heller, then Professor and Head of the newly established Bristol Department of Pharmacology. Earning his B.Sc. at Bristol in 1958, Karl came under the direction of Dr. Heller for his Doctoral work, completed in 1961, with the D.Sc. awarded in '68. As alluded to by Professor Bern's Vignette, the Heller Department was a particularly rich research and training environment at the time, and the die was cast for the unique role that Karl was to play in putting the Urotensins on the map. Importantly, it was the interaction between Karl and Howard Bern that lit the match of Urotensin discovery. During Karl's brief sabbatical period in the Bern laboratory (1967–1968), where the impressive actions of teleost urophysial extracts on smooth muscle preparations were observed, the key assays for tracking the purification of the two active principles, Urotensin-I and Urotensin-II were born. Karl took on the purification of Urotensin-I, whilst Howard Bern took responsibility for Urotensin-II. From that stepping stone, Karl soon emigrated from Britain to Canada in December of 1969, where he joined the Department of Pharmacology & Therapeutics at the University of Calgary, Faculty of Medicine, under the Direction of Dr. Keith MacCannell. There, he led his productive laboratory until retiring to Comox, British Columbia in 1989. Having agreed to leave Urotensin II to Professor Bern, Karl, with his colleagues, vigorously pursued the isolation and sequencing of teleost Urotensin-I, an intriguing hypotensive and corticotropin-releasing neuropeptide. It was most fitting that Karl, an avid fisherman, would be the one responsible for 'catching' the more than 200,000 urophyses required for the isolation procedure. Related to Karl's work, honours came, including the Pharmacological Society of Canada Award for outstanding contributions to Pharmacology in Canada (1990) and election as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada (1987).

The high caliber of his work is to be found in the over 350 original articles, book chapters and reviews that flowed from his pen. Always on the lookout, Karl caught not only fish, but also netted both personal and professional friendships that persisted throughout his life, making links to Japan, throughout Europe and the Americas. On moving to Comox, British Columbia, he hosted many long-time colleagues who benefited from his generous sharing of freshly caught salmon, expertly smoked for consumption. He was aided in these festivities first by Hildegard, until her untimely death and then graciously by Inge Naglis, who happily joined Karl as his partner for the remainder of the time left to him in Comox. There, in his armchair awaiting a

HOLLENBERG: Karl Lederis

salmon dinner, he passed away suddenly in March of 2007 at the age of 87. Overall, Karl was always 'fishing' for new ideas, new friends and new venues so as to bring ashore a legacy of research excellence and friendship to be valued by all who had the privilege to come to know him.

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(Author's title given as of the time of writing)