

In this tribute to Professor Richard J. Blandau, I'm not going to comment on the more than a hundred published papers, the many books on ovulation, fertilization, and embryonic development, or the multiple prizes and medals he received during his long and productive life. I'll, rather, give a portrait of this remarkable colleague from inside his laboratory and from the close friendship we shared for several exciting years of research collaboration.

Dick had tremendous intuition to identify critical research targets and an insatiable craving to understand the challenging mysteries of reproductive biology. He was a remarkable explorer. His keen talent to tell signal from noise and to scrutinize the faintest clues in data sets led him to tackle the most difficult questions in reproductive physiology. He made detailed notes of his observations but held his horses in theorizing when dealing with complex phenomena, where secrets were hidden in a multifaceted biology. Richard had Germanic discipline from his family upbringing and a characteristic intellectual insolence. However, confronted with results he could not interpret, he turned into a humble student anxious to crack the riddle at hand. He was a careful gambler fully aware of his limits, ready to seek help when a bet became uncertain.

Professor Blandau was a strong leader and a great teacher; he managed his research team in a hands-off style, regularly allowing his students and postdoctoral fellows to take the initiative. He often knew the trail they might be tracking would sometimes go nowhere, but he trusted that they would soon come back with a lesson well learned. He told me once, "all the baloney we publish, no matter how lauded [...] its initial impact, it'll receive attention for one or two years at the most, and in ten years no one, even ourselves, will remember: the only legacy we leave behind are the people we form." Several generations of medical and graduate students attest to Dick's wisdom, and they remember him as the enlightened master, teaching his disciples the secrets, rewards, and pains of our challenging trade.

Landing in Blandau's kingdom, for someone with training in biophysics and engineering, was like entering a mysterious castle with riddles written on every wall and a rich trove of data waiting to be deciphered.

It was a privilege to be Richard's friend and colleague.

Pedro Verdugo, M.D.

Professor

Depts. of Bioengineering and Internal Medicine

University of Washington