
In Memoriam: Prof. Dr. Juan Manuel Tato, Padre

Prof. Dr. Juan Manuel Tato, padre—whom we all called *maestro*—was born on July 18, 1902, at Buenos Aires, Argentina, where he also died on March 28, 2004. A great friend, patron, and communicator in the fields of otology and neurotology has left us. Mourning continues around the world over this loss of an unforgettable clinical investigator, surgeon, lecturer, teacher and, especially, international communicator.

I met Dr. Tato in 1969 when he visited the famous ear, nose, and throat (ENT) clinic at the University of Würzburg, Germany. At that time, when an ordinary man would already have retired from his profession, he still had his keen curiosity in all the new and developing methods in the field of ENT. During that period, he became very much interested in the new steps being made in the field of neurotology. As he had specialized in Buenos Aires as early as 1928 for ENT, he soon founded a school of audiology. There, in 1933, he performed fenestration of the inner ear, the first in all of South America. His book, *Lecciones de Audiología* (1946), was a central publication for this field on that continent.

In Buenos Aires, Dr. Tato occupied the second chair for otology and phono-audiology. He regularly taught courses in that specialty both in Buenos Aires and all over South America and in many other parts of the world. In 1977, he organized the ENT World Congress (International Federation of Otological Societies [IFOS] Congress) there. Thereafter, he became the president of the IFOS, which soon led to his becoming world president of the Oto-Rhino-Laryngology Society (ORL).

All the prominent names and celebrities in the field of otolaryngology in Europe, North America, South America, Australia, and Asia were well-known to Dr. Tato. As early as 1972, Dr. Tato invited me to collaborate with him in teaching an international course on neurotology for three months in Buenos Aires under the title "Equilibrimetría Práctica." This was a great success, drawing numerous participants from many countries. Thereafter, together with the late Dr. Manfredo Lützler, we published the first Spanish volume in this field under the same title. In that work, we outlined the basic ideas about a neurootological network analy-



sis, using a cybernetic approach for combining the test evaluations of the vestibuloocular, the retinoocular, the vestibulospinal, and other nystagmus function systems. Living with Dr. Tato for several months showed me how easily he handled the connections between specialists and lay people from very different nations, laboratories, and scientific backgrounds.

His important legacy was to teach us that nobody can take from us more than he or she contributes, whether it be for scientific discussions, for a symposium, or for an exchange of ideas in scientific

publications. For many years, while meeting all his international obligations in many countries on five continents, he came to visit us in our neurootology laboratory in Würzburg.

At Buenos Aires, as early as 1972 and increasingly in 1973 and 1974, he developed the idea of founding an international neurootological and equilibrimetric society. He insisted that this society be multilingual (i.e., accessible in English, Spanish, German, and French). Its meetings, he believed, should be open and friendly, so that all who had a new idea in the field could freely stand before the assembly and explain their concepts. As he already was editor of a Spanish-language ENT journal, *Revista de ORL, Argentina*, he proposed that this journal should incorporate from the very beginning proceedings of the new society.

With Dr. Tato's help, in the summer of 1974 we founded the International Neurootological and Equilibrimetric Society (NES), Reg., according to German legal requirements. Since then, this society has grown and flourished, owing to its format: Every two years the general assembly takes place at Bad Kissingen, Germany (where the society is registered), and every alternate two years it takes place in another country where the vice president of the society hosts the meeting. Thus, the society has hosted colleagues from the most distant points of the world (e.g., Germany, Spain, Sweden, Italy, Israel, Hungary, Portugal, United States of America, Brazil, India, Japan and, next year, Australia). When, in 1996, the NES received grants (mainly through a Japanese group led by Prof. Dr. Eiji Sakata, Tokyo) for creating a science award for important

neurootologists, we founded the Tato-Claussen Award. Prof. Dr. Tato then agreed that this award should be given for the first time in March 1996 to our late friend, Prof. Dr. Jack Pulec from Los Angeles. During the Thirty-First NES Congress, March 26, 2004—two days before Dr. Tato died—Prof. Dr. Tamio Kamei received this award at Bad Kissingen.

Thus, Dr. Tato has been with us constantly, like an idol and a mentor. During his last years, he stayed with his family in Buenos Aires and continued to see patients until the year 2000. By the time I last saw him in

December 2002, he had completely retired into his flat at the Calle Santa Fe in Buenos Aires. Even then, he encouraged us to continue on our way as we had begun with him in the early 1970s.

A great physician, a stimulating teacher, and an international authority in the field of otology and neurootology has left us. He was also a friend, who knew both how to compromise and to guide us into the future. We shall never forget our great maestro, Juan Manuel Tato.

Prof. Dr. Claus-Frenz Claussen