

Obituary

Vernon G Vernier, 1924–2004

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Vern Vernier, an ACNP Member since 1965, died on May 20, 2004 in Newark, Delaware. He was 79.

Vern was a neuropharmacologist with a passion and talent for quantification and bioassay for use in drug discovery. Early in his career, in collaboration with Klaus Unna at Illinois, he developed surgically induced models of tremor in primates and used them as a measure of the efficacy of antiparkinson drugs. With Joe Brady at Walter Reed, he was among the early workers who studied the effects of reserpine, chlorpromazine, and mephenesin on conditioned behavior in animals. At Merck, working with David Brodie, Harley Hanson, and Clem Stone, he published the first paper describing the pharmacology of amitriptyline. He collaborated with Al Rubin, Bill Schmidt, Bob Clark, and John Stump at DuPont on projects that led to the discovery, characterization, and development of the anti-parkinson utility of amantadine, the antipsychotic agent

molindone, the opioid agonist–antagonist analgesic, nalbuphine, and the pure opioid antagonist nalrexone.

Vern was born in Norwalk, CT and was educated in the public schools of Ithaca, NY and Chicago, IL. He started his undergraduate studies at University of Chicago and went on to Randolph-Macon College and Temple University with the Army Specialized Training Program during World War II. His graduate studies in Medicine were at the George Washington University School of Medicine and the University of Illinois College of Medicine, where he received his BS degree in Medicine in 1947 and his MD in 1949. He stayed on at Illinois as a Research Associate and Instructor in the Department of Pharmacology from 1950 to 1952. He joined Merck, Sharpe & Dohme as a Research Associate in Neuropharmacology in West Point, PA in 1952. After a brief stint in the military at Walter Reed as a neuropharmacologist from 1954 to 1955, he rejoined Merck as head of the Neuropharmacology Unit from 1956 to 1962. He joined DuPont Medical Products Department in 1962 as a section manager and became Director of Pharmacology in 1974. He retired from DuPont in 1985, but continued his involvement in pharmacology as a Visiting Professor of Pharmacology at the Temple University School of Medicine and a Professor of Biology at the University of Delaware.

Vern was an ardent long-distance runner and hiker who was proud of taking part in 27 marathons, including 14 in Boston. He hiked the length of the Appalachian Trail nearly four times and helped map the trail with GPS in hand for the Appalachian Trail Conference. As 'Del Doc', Vern was the hiking medical columnist for the Appalachian Trailway News and wrote extensively, giving advice on nutrition, foot care, and general health to many hikers.

Vern was an accomplished musician who was one of the earliest members of the Newark Symphony Orchestra, playing the oboe and English horn. He was also a devoted member and participant in his church and in the Scouting movement.

His wife, four children, and seven grandchildren survive him. Memorial contributions can be made to the Newark Symphony Orchestra (PO Box 7775, Newark, DE 19714-7775) or to the Appalachian Trail Conference (PO Box 807, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425).

Prepared by Robert I Taber.