

## Dr. Norman R. Farnsworth

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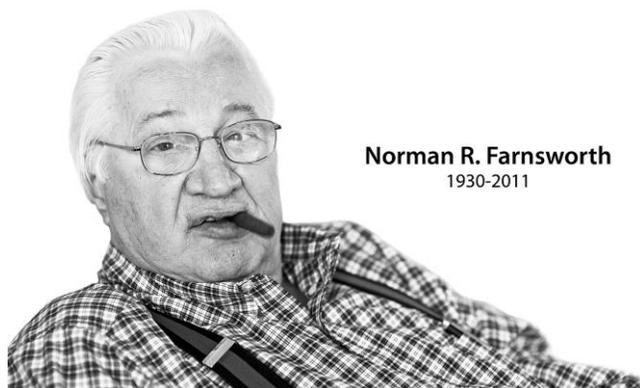
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**Norman R. Farnsworth**

1930-2011

BLACPMA wishes to dedicate this obituary to one of the initial supporters for the creation and growth of this Bulletin and Editorial board member since 2004, Prof. Norman R. Farnsworth.

Norman R. Farnsworth (1930 – 2011), “Norm” to his many friends and colleagues, passed away at the age of 81 on September 10, 2011 at the St. Joseph Hospital in Chicago.

Prof. Farnsworth’s memorial service was held on September 14 at the North Shore Baptist Church in Chicago. His funeral and burial with military honors took place in Lynn, Massachusetts on September 16 at Pine Grove Cemetery. Norman Farnsworth was a veteran of the Korean War, drafted into the US Army in 1949 at the age of 18, served in the Third Infantry Division, 7th Regimental Combat Team. After being seriously wounded in the winter of 1950, he was awarded the Korean Ribbon with Four Battle Stars, the Combat Medical Badge, and Bronze Star with “V” device (American Botanical Council, 2011).

Prof. Farnsworth is survived by his devoted wife Priscilla Marston Farnsworth, his brother Bruce, and sister-in-law Donna of Massachusetts, a niece and nephew, and more than a hundred graduate students, PhD’s, post-doctoral fellows, and close colleagues who will always cherish the beloved memories he has left (American Botanical Council, 2011).

There are many tributes that tell the life and works of Prof. Farnsworth, (Fong et al., 2006; The American Society of Pharmacognosy. 2011; American Botanical Council, 2011; Seigler, 2012).

Norman Farnsworth spent more than 50 years studying the medicinal properties of plants, critical work in a world where, according to one of his colleagues, 80 percent of the population uses herbal medicines (Megan, 2011).

Farnsworth was a longtime member of the World Health Organization’s Expert Advisory Panel on Traditional Medicine. After becoming involved with the organization as a consultant in the 1980’s,

saw the organization grow from a single location to its present, now counting 18 centers (Megan, 2011).

In the mid-1990's, Farnsworth was appointed to President Clinton's Commission on Dietary Supplements labels and worked to establish requirements for supplement manufactures and help consumers have a better chance of getting safer products (Megan, 2011).

For more than 25 years, he worked with a core group including Harry HS Fong, Audrey S Bingel, Geoffrey A Cordell, Djaja Doel Soejarto, Donald A Waller, A Douglas Kinghorn, John M Pezzuto, Richard B van Breemen, Judy L Bolton, Guido F Pauli and Gail B Mahady (Fong et al., 2006).

### *Principal Contributions*

1975 NAPRALERT (Database on Medicinal Plants)

1959 Founding fathers of the American Society of Pharmacognosy.

1961 – 1962 Second President

1959 – 1961 Vice President

1959 – 1962 He managed the Lloyd Library and Museum in Cincinnati (Ohio), for the rights to co-publish LLOYDIA, the forerunner of the Journal of Natural Products, as the official publication of the American Society of Pharmacognosy.

### *Awards*

- Fellow of the American of Pharmaceutical Science and of the Linnean Society of London.
- Honorary doctoral degrees from the University of Paris V, Uppsala University, Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Science and from the University of Pittsburgh.
- Distinguished Economic Botanist of the Society for Economic Botany.
- Honorary Member of the American Society of Pharmacognosy.
- Research Achievement Award from the Academy of Pharmaceutical Science.
- Research Achievement Award from the American Society of Pharmacognosy.
- American Society of Pharmacognosy Norman R. Farnsworth Research Achievement Award.

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### *Some other colleagues are sharing our sadness:*

#### *Francisco Morón (Cuba)*

The first time I heard about Prof. Norman R. Farnsworth was when he visited Havana to give a lecture in a Congress of Pharmacy in the middle of the 1970's. I was doing my medical residency in Pharmacology and my boss gave me the text of his interesting lecture which I appreciated very much and will never forget. Life is surprising and I was unexpectedly in charge of the Medicinal Plant Cuban National Research and Teaching Program of Medical Universities in 1987 and few years later of the Medicinal Plants Health Ministry Program. At the beginning of the 90's, I had the pleasure to attend Farnsworth's lecture in an international congress (Lima, Peru); we exchanged only a few words and ideas and unfortunately we kept no contact since that time. I always appreciate very much his creation of the NAPRALERT database and his papers concerning methodological points of view on medicinal plant research. Prof. Farnsworth has being and will be one of my most favorite references.

Prof. Francisco J. Morón MD, PhD  
Medical Science University of Havana  
Cuba

*Arnaldo Bandoni (Argentina)*

Ha sido un referente indiscutido e insoslayable. La historia de la Farmacognosia está marcada por varios hitos como resultado de su prolífica labor, entre los que pueden citarse: la promoción de los *screenings* fitoquímicos, centenares de trabajos referidos a una variedad de temas y especies, la integración de bases de datos como el legendario *Pharmacognosy Titles* o el posterior e insuperable NAPRALERT, la incubación de publicaciones de primer nivel, como *Phytomedicine*, *Journal of Natural Products*, el reconocimiento de la importancia de los productos naturales en el vademécum actual, etc. Pienso que fue uno de los principales gestores de toda una multifacética y multidisciplinaria actividad desarrollada en los últimos 50 años y que dio cuerpo y cohesión a la Farmacognosia actual, con un sentido amplio, desde la Etnobotánica hasta la Biotecnología, desde la taxonomía hasta la metabolómica, desde la biosíntesis hasta el desarrollo industrial de drogas de origen natural con bioactividad demostrada.

Prof. Dr. Arnaldo L. Bandoni  
Cátedra de Farmacognosia  
Facultad de Farmacia y Bioquímica  
Universidad de Buenos Aires

*Ronald Chaves (Costa Rica)*

Dr. Farnsworth was a Master Mind and an excellent Talent Scout. We had the opportunity to know him through the testimony of many good friends in the Pharmacognosy and Plant Sciences Study. We will foresee to keep going his enthusiasm and bioethics for the years to come.

Ronald Chaves  
Member AAPH  
International Ethnobotany Symposio

*Patrick Moyna (Uruguay)*

En realidad yo no tuve mucho contacto con el Prof. Farnsworth, y no soy el candidato ideal para comentar sobre su obra. En América latina debe haber docenas de ex-alumnos y colaboradores que tengan algo más interesante para aportar. Creo que solamente coincidimos en un par de congresos. Sin embargo, sin duda fue uno de esos personajes "más grandes que la realidad". Por su trabajo científico de primer nivel logró que la química de productos naturales tomara vuelo nuevamente, reviviendo su destacado papel en la búsqueda de nuevos medicamentos y en descubrir los intrincados caminos de la naturaleza, y así revivir en

todos nuestra capacidad de asombro frente a los aspectos moleculares de los mecanismos por los que se desarrolla el mundo de los seres vivos. Además de su trabajo científico, logró mucho por su personalidad exhuberante, contagiosa y hasta diría pícara y alegre. Siendo una tradición en él, la corbata de color rojo fulgurante que siempre llevaba puesta.

Patrick Moyna  
Universidad La Republica  
Uruguay

*Guido F Pauli (United States of America)*

In analogy to what others have said about the recent passing of a major figure and leader in his respective field, I feel the following words are the most adequate expression of what has happend: *Pharmacognosy has lost a visionary and creative genius, and the world has lost an amazing human being. Those of us who have been fortunate enough to know and work with Norman have lost a dear friend and an inspiring mentor. Norman leaves behind an academic environment that only he could have built, and his spirit will forever be the foundation of Pharmacognosy.*

Norman Farnsworth's self -assessment as "the big picture guy" who "never worked a day of his life" describes the essence of what it takes to live a happy life on a fulfilling mission. His vision and energy formed the basis of the extraordinary role he played in the lives of many, including myself. Norm's academic leadership resulted in, but not from, multiple doctoral degrees, and even the highest accolades were unable to distract him from being a "normal person". Capitalizing on these unique talents, he established a truly collaborative research environment in the College of Pharmacy at UIC. This style of research continues to serve as an example for contemporary academic research.

His support of BLACPMA and its associated academic community as Board Member is one of the many typical examples of how he promoted the science he loved and supported the people who shared his passion. For the past decade, I have had both the distinct privilege and great pleasure to share "workless work" and every-day discussions with Norm. I am sure he would thoroughly enjoy if his collaborative spirit could continue to inspire the community of scientist that contribute to this journal as authors and readers.

Prof. Guido F Pauli  
University of Illinois at Chicago.