



Letter to the editor

Victor Feron, A life dedicated to toxicology and toxicologic pathology



Victor J. Feron, Vic for his friends and colleagues, died on February 10 2018 after an illness of a few months. He did not like obituaries. Therefore, this is not an obituary but a celebration and deeply felt 'thank you' to him for all he has done to the fields of toxicologic pathology, toxicology, risk evaluation, cancer research, and most of all for his mentorship of many of us. After his study at Utrecht University and the Free University of Brussels, he trained in laboratory animal pathology under Prof. Dr. Piet Wensvoort at the Institute of Veterinary Pathology of Utrecht University together with Robert (Bobby) Kroes and Hans Mullink. Mullink became one of the few Dutch expert laboratory animal pathologists, while Vic Feron and Bobby Kroes developed the field of toxicologic pathology in Holland, Kroes at the Dutch Public Health Institute RIVM in Bilthoven and Vic Feron at the TNO Institute in Zeist. Vic was recruited to TNO to develop toxicologic pathology in the new toxicology department. He did not only that, but also created a robust research program on respiratory tract carcinogenesis, first studying lung cancer induction in Syrian hamsters by the tobacco carcinogen benzo[a]pyrene, and later focusing on volatile constituents of cigarette smoke, such as acetaldehyde, formaldehyde, and acrolein which turned out to cause nasal cancer in rats. He was one of the first toxicologists worldwide to pay attention to the nasal passages, an area thought unimportant because of the alleged lack of serious nasal lesions in humans. To do these studies, he set up a versatile inhalation toxicology facility at TNO, capitalizing on the considerable analytical chemistry resources at the Institute. Over the years he became a world-renowned expert on inhalation carcinogenesis and toxicology, risk evaluation, and toxicologic pathology and a major force in toxicology and cancer research in the Netherlands and Europe, rising to become department head at CIVO and professor of toxicology at Utrecht University. His broad interest in toxicology is also apparent from his pioneering work on combination toxicology a.k.a. toxicology of mixtures. Besides all his scientific work, we believe that Vic's most enduring achievement has been the Dutch cadre of toxicologic pathologists and (inhalation) toxicologists he trained and mentored. He also stimulated

them (us) to engage in scientific research and gave us the time to do this and the freedom and space to pursue our own scientific interests and provided us with contacts in the toxicology/carcinogenesis community to develop our own research programs.

After his retirement from TNO and his professorship, Vic stayed engaged in scientific endeavors for several more years, and subsequently pursued other interests, including writing articles for a Dutch website with news about books. Vic was a man of great integrity and one significant lasting contribution to the people he mentored was his emphasis to be scientifically independent/. We are eternally grateful for Vic's mentorship and guidance, in addition to his many other contributions to the career and personal development of us and many others. What a wonderful life and legacy! Thank you, Vic.



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