



Editorial

In memoriam - Francisco José de Abreu Matos – 1924 – 2008

He was born on May 21st, 1924, in Fortaleza, the charming city capital of the State of Ceará-Brazil, as a great-grandson, grandson and son of pharmacists. His great-grandfather, Francisco José de Mattos (1810-1876), licensed in 1836 as Imperial Surgeon, developed a pharmaceutical formulation from two plants (he found on the backyard of the now known Casa de José de Alencar, a touristic point in Fortaleza, on a small farm property of the Republic Senator Martiniano de Alencar, father of the famous Brazilian writer. He designated it “purgative pills of surgeon Mattos” but the peasant people from northeastern Brazil called it “pílula-do-mato”, because “mato” in Portuguese means brushwood, thus “brushwood pills”. His grandfather, Joaquim de Alencar Mattos (1860-1930) revested the pills with a silver colored substance and registered officially the brand name “Pílula de Matos”, while his father Francisco Campelo Matos (1894-1985) dedicated his entire life teaching biology and commercializing the pills at that time made at either Fortaleza or Baturité factories. Dr. Matos

was very proud of the pharmaceutical principles inheritance his predecessors have legate to him. In 1945 he earned the degree of Chemist-Pharmacist from the Faculdade de Farmácia e Odontologia do Ceará later the Universidade Federal do Ceará, and in 1960 got his Pharmacognosy Ph. D. equivalent degree from UFC with a project developed under the supervision of Dr. Richard Wasick at Universidade de São Paulo. From there on he became the Cathedric Professor of Pharmacognosy of the College of Pharmacy. Ten years later he moved to the Department of Organic and Inorganic Chemistry on the Pici Campus of UFC where he taught Organic Chemistry and was responsible for a new discipline “Isolation and Characterization of Secondary Metabolites from Plants” that later would become part of the Graduate Course in Organic Chemistry, a program he has helped Dr. Afrânio Craveiro and other colleagues to create by 1975. As an “old” teacher, despite the success of NMR, he loved IR and UV as tools for structure determination. He has served at Universidade Federal do Ceará as the Chairman of the Department of Organic and Inorganic Chemistry, Director of the Natural Science Centre, Director of and Coordinator of the Graduate Program in Organic Chemistry where he has oriented several Thesis (Dr) and Dissertations (MSc). He has authored, or coauthored, more than 90 scientific papers in either national or international journals, and presented about 300 communications in scientific society meetings. He had a longer contribution on published books, as author or collaborator, either scientific or text books about phytoterapy, phytochemistry, popular use and scientific knowledge of medicinal plants. Some of them deserve to be mentioned: 1. Óleos Essenciais de Plantas do Nordeste. 2. Farmácias Vivas; four editions about a system of utilization of medicinal plants projected for minority communities. 3. As Plantas das Farmácias Vivas. 4. Plantas Mediciniais – Guia de Seleção e Emprego Medicinal de Plantas Usadas em Fitoterapia no Nordeste do Brasil. 5. Constituintes Químicos Ativos de Plantas Mediciniais Brasileira. 6. Formulário



Fitoterápico do Prof. Dias da Rocha. 7. Introdução à Fitoquímica Experimental. Two editions of a text book for the isolation e purification of natural products from plants. Finally, maybe the most famous, Plantas Mediciniais no Brasil Nativas e Exóticas, in collaboration and edition with Harri Lorenzi. This prolific contribution on medicinal plants was the result a project he started in 1983 he designated “FARMÁCIAS VIVAS” (living pharmacies) based on his experience in cultivating plants at the UFC Horto de Plantas Mediciniais (now UFC medicinal plants garden Francisco José de Abreu Matos). In the same year he was honored Professor Emeritus of the UFC. As one can notices

after retiring in 1980 he has never become “inactive”. In 1994, at his seventieth birthday, a law from the City Hall of Fortaleza established his birth date, 21st of may, as the “medicinal plant day”. It is necessary to emphasize the broad application of the “livingpharmacies” principles, a social health program for impoverished people based on the phytoterapic pharmaceutical assistance on scientific basis. From the few medicinal plant gardens in Fortaleza it spreads over the Ceará State, later to the Northeast region and in now days all over the Country.

I have myself enjoyed of being closed to Dr. Matos (or “veího”, as I introduced my “good morning” to him). He was my teacher, back in 1973, introducing me the Organic lab and later (1977), as graduate student, on the isolation and purification of natural products. I have participated of several field

trips for plant collection with his great friend, Dr. Afrânio Fernandes, the biologist from the Prisco Bezerra Herbarium. They have taught me the art of differentiating a “marmeleiro” from a “velame” (*Croton* genus, Euphorbiaceae), “alecrins” (Labiatae) from “cidreiras” (Verbenaceae). I also learned how to check *in situ* the possibility of a plant to possess, or not, essential oil. Collecting leaves or fruits, crushing them and use both hands to make a “hood” to smell the fragrance. Some times we also had to taste them. I also learned how to prepare the voucher specimens and, coming back to the lab, how to extract, separate and purify the constituents. Every plant had a little story: how people used it and what for. He was a great story teller, particularly about his professors and important botanists he had joined traveling through out the “caatinga”, his favorite flora patch. He was truly a Pharmacognosist, not forgetting that for me, and some of my UFC colleagues, he was a friendly shoulder, a confident, a counselor, a psychologist, a physician (our “roots’ doctor”). I do not remember to have seen him yelling on anybody, he was always firm, precise, but quite. His generosity has also to be greatly appreciated. To those who have not seen him dead, as a said on his burial, let us just imagine that he has not died, but simply has been earlier invited to spend the 2008 Holy Night with the angels, his wife and the other relatives at the side of God. For sure he has already started the “heaven medicinal plants garden” to prepare “spiritual teas” not to treat bodies, but souls.

December 23th, 2008
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