

OBITUARY

In memory of Solange Akselrod



We must say that it is a very sad privilege for us to write a few lines in memory of Solange Akselrod, but at the same time we feel grateful for having this further opportunity to think of her.

Solange had a lively intelligence and understood from the beginning the importance of properly processing and interpreting the information hidden in the heart rate variability (HRV) signal. The whole community of scientists in this area is grateful to her because, in her papers (and especially in the three visionary and overwhelming pages of the *Science* paper: Akselrod, S. *et al.* One contribution of 15 to a Theme Issue ‘Addressing the complexity of cardiovascular regulation’.

Science 1981, **213**, 220–222), she created a milestone: she and her co-authors were the first to really investigate the physiological nature of the rhythms which other researchers had already detected in the HRV signal (Sayers, B. M., Kitney, R. I., Rompelmann, O., Mulder, G. and others). I am grateful to her because it was after reading her seminal paper in *Science* that, together with Alberto Malliani and his group, we were encouraged to tackle the problem of properly quantifying the spectral information contained in this signal.

When talking with her about our common research interest, we were always convinced that, when adding new information to the scientific knowledge of this fascinating topic, there were still new things to be discovered: like an endless well. You could really taste her strong commitment to understanding more about the underlying physiology, but at the same time you realized how she embraced such a topic and, I am sure, also had great fun with it.

I had the opportunity and also the time to interact more closely with her when she participated in the IEEE-EMBS Summer School on Advanced Biomedical Signal Processing at the Certosa di Pontignano, Siena, in 1999. I still remember our quiet discussions, enhanced by the magical atmosphere of a beautiful medieval abbey, when she displayed peaceful evidence of her commitment. I am pleased to think that she has passed simply from one form of energy to another of a different and mysterious type, and wherever she is now she certainly has many things to do, as usual.

Ciao and shalom Solange, we'll never forget you and what you have meant to us.

S. Cerutti

Department of Bioengineering, Politecnico of Milan, Milan 20133, Italy
E-mail address: cerutti@biomed.polimi.it

We have been given an impossible task. To memorialize an incredible woman and give you insight into who she was and how she influenced the lives of those close to her. For those of you who knew her, you have your own stories that may find some resonance with ours. This is a personal note, as it is the only way I can remember Solange.

My friendship with Solange began when she accepted me as a postdoc in the Center for Medical Physics at Tel Aviv University, which she built into the large and active research group that it became and where she spent the majority of her career. She was warm, supportive and created an incredibly nutritive environment—a rarity anywhere these days, but particularly in science. Solange was a Zionist, having moved to Israel on her own at the age of 18. She has four children who were the centre of her world. Their pictures shone in her office, and it was known to all that, if she got a call from one of them, they were top priority.

Solange had many unique gifts, but one in particular stands out. As a one-faculty-member department, she had many Masters and PhD students, yet she was able to guide each of her students to fruitful scientific and personal achievements, seemingly effortlessly. When she accepted shy, insecure students, they graduated as intelligent, compassionate and creative Masters and PhDs. Not only was her door always open, but she also had a smile and encouraging

advice for each encounter. She knew all of our husbands/wives; she loved our children and enjoyed the break in routine when we brought them to the office. She knew how to nourish her students not only to achieve scientifically but also to be better human beings. She taught us that, if you give priority to the important things in life, everything else will work itself out.

Israel is known for its start-up companies, and the fruit of Solange's efforts can be seen throughout the high-tech industry where many of her students can be found in leadership or research positions. She challenged her students to be creative, independent and to trust their instincts, and we cherish that doctrine wherever we go. We loved her, we learned from her and we miss her!

Solange faced many challenges in her life—she faced them bravely, stoically and without a whisper of complaint. She saw the myriad ways she had been blessed, and was able to ignore the many ways she was challenged, up to the very end. She leaves us with the legacy of trying to be the best we can in all that we do, and do what we love.

Linda R. Davrath
The Abramson Center for Medical Physics, Tel Aviv University,
Tel Aviv 69978, Israel
E-mail address: linda@bsp.co.il