

MEMORIAL

Bernie Brucker (1947 to 2008)

A well-loved member of the Association for Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback, Dr. Bernie Brucker, passed away on Saturday, February 16, 2008. He died at his home in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, of a heart attack at the age of 61. As a member of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and Department of Homeland Security, he had just returned the previous day from a routine Coast Guard patrol.

Bernard S. Brucker was born in Hollywood, California, to Herman and Sylvia Brucker in 1946. He received a bachelor's degree from Monmouth University in New Jersey, a master's degree from Eastern New Mexico University, and a doctorate in psychology at New York University. Dr. Brucker had a distinguished career in South Florida. He was an associate professor at the University of Miami's Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Othopedics and Rehabilitation, and Radiology; director of the Brucker Biofeedback Center at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine/Jewish Home and Hospital; and chief of the Division of Psychology at UM/Jackson Memorial Medical Center from 1981 to 2005. He was a past-president of the Academy of Rehabilitation Psychology, past chairman of the State of Florida Brain and Spinal Injury Advisory Council Association, past chairman of the Ventilator Dependent Rehabilitation Task Force for the Department of Health in the State of Florida, and the president of the Academy of Rehabilitation Psychology and the Florida Brain Injury Association. He was one of the original founders and co-director of the Miami Project to Cure Paralysis.

Dr. Brucker received numerous professional awards, including the Karl F. Heiser Presidential Award from the American Psychological Association, the Gill Moss Award from the National Spinal Cord Injury Association for outstanding scientific and clinical contributions to spinal cord injury, and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Miami-Dade County Chapter of the Florida Psychological Association.

Dr. Brucker's career was dedicated to improving the quality of life for people with physical disabilities. He was most widely known for his use of surface electromyography (SEMG) to treat paralysis. His operant conditioning protocols for restoring muscular function became known as the Brucker Method. People from all over the world with physical disabilities came to South Florida to work with him. He used his biofeedback training protocols to aid in the rehabilitation of many high-profile clients, including former Lynyrd Skynyrd guitarist Larkin Allen Collins, Jr., who became paralyzed from a car accident, and Detroit Lions' offensive lineman Michael Utey, who was paralyzed by a football injury. He helped open



rehabilitation clinics in several other countries, including Brazil and Germany. Dr. Brucker also published widely on the use of SEMG in rehabilitation, pain management, spinal cord injury, and the biofeedback treatment of other disorders.

We at the Association for Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback have always known Bernie as the guy in the black three-piece suit, boots, and cowboy hat (see the accompanying photo). Over the years, he was always a source of humor. His eyes would sparkle as he launched into his latest favorite joke. After a good laugh, we would settle in for a long night of humor, exchanging jokes and stories. In the wee hours, when everyone had exhausted their memories of the best stories about priests, rabbis, and ministers or about Miami Jewish couples, Bernie would just be getting started. That special charm and warmth will be sorely missed.

Those who know him well remember him as outgoing, friendly, and witty. Bernie loved the water and lived on a 63-foot Bertram yacht with his wife of 35 years, Dr. Rita Nacken Gugel, and their four Labrador retrievers, Caulo, Thor, Zeus, and Achilles. In addition to his wife, he is survived by his brother Daniel Brucker, his sister-in-law Margaret Jamolych, and his many friends and colleagues. We will all miss him.

—Contributed by Randy Neblett, MA, LPC