In memory of Lloyd D. Partridge

By Andrej A. Romanovsky

Lloyd D. Partridge. Photo courtesy of L. Donald Partridge

It made me very sad to learn that Lloyd is no longer with us. I remember him vividly…

One day Lloyd was taking me in his Windstar for dinner at his house. We were driving on a highway, in the right lane. Every car moving in the same direction seemed to go at least three times faster than Lloyd's van. A car would rapidly approach us from behind, overtake our van within a fraction of a second, and then rush to the horizon in front of us and disappear. "Is there any reason you are driving so slowly?" I asked. "Oh," replied Lloyd (his answers often started with oh), "I am just going with the traffic." On the entire stretch of the highway between the university campus and his house, Lloyd was the only person who could have thought that he was going with the traffic. That did not seem to bother him though. After all, maybe he was going with the traffic – his own traffic, the traffic he created, the traffic of one.

I knew Lloyd during his later years; when I met him, he was 69. Yet, I am fairly sure that this is what he was doing during his entire life: going with his own traffic. This implies doing those things that he considered worth doing, and doing them in the way he thought appropriate…. When I think about Lloyd, the hero from Ayn Rand's The Fountainhead comes to my mind.

Lloyd was not a thermophysiologist, and he certainly was not a pharmacologist of any kind.* I do believe, however, that Lloyd's ideas on physiological regulation will change the way people, thermal physiologists included, think about homeostasis. (His ideas have definitely affected the way I think about thermoregulation, and a snooping reader can find a few cases where I cite Lloyd's work or explicitly acknowledge his intellectual influence.) Regulation without a centralized government (without a single controller); inappropriateness of the term set point; an elegant way of substituting set point with balance point in common thermophysiological definitions … these are some of Lloyd's ideas, ideas that will continue to stimulate young minds entering the fields of

physiology and neuroscience. Luckily for these young people, they will be discovering Lloyd's papers (some of which could have been published as separate books).

I especially like his 1982 essay entitled "The good enough calculi of evolving control systems: evolution is not engineering" (American Journal of Physiology 242: R173-R177). According to Lloyd, the paper was written for an informal exchange among friends and was submitted to the journal by one of them – not by Lloyd himself. For years thereafter, Lloyd was unhappy with the fact that the journal wanted Figure 1 to have a formal legend, and that by introducing such a legend he somehow compromised the associative nature of the figure and made it more exact than it was meant to be.

In October 1998, I invited Lloyd to give a talk at the Legacy Health System in Portland, Oregon, where I worked at that time. Lloyd's talk was on "Control in biological systems." In anticipation of what I thought would be one of main points of the talk, I introduced his lecture by reading the following piece from Lloyd's and his son Don's book The Nervous System: Its Function and Its Interaction with the World (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993): "… the complexly organized activity of flocks of birds, schools of fish, hives of bees, and hills of ants emerges from the interaction of individuals each with simple rules for interaction. These systems operate with neither a leader nor a global rule for operation … It is not necessary to assume that all complexity of neural activity grows out of intrinsically complex rules in a single unified system" (p. 439). While Lloyd was getting to the podium, I distinctly heard him disapprovingly mumbling under his breath: "What a fancy introduction!" Fancy was not exactly a compliment in Lloyd's vocabulary.

Although there are many more dead people than alive, more scientists are currently living on this planet than the total number of scientists who lived before us. As the proportion of scientists drastically increases, what do you think happens to their caliber? I hope Lloyd feels at home in his new world, the one that has a much smaller proportion of scientists. I bet they are having good time trying to understand how that other world works. And I bet they follow their own traffic, often the traffic of one…

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