



Tributes for Gene J. Brutten, Ph.D. (1928–2013)



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Martine: Tribute to Gene

To Gene,

my teacher, a well-spring of knowledge
my mentor, a scholarly example
my husband, a fountain of love

My life story with Gene begins in my home town of Gent, Belgium on May 28th, 1983. It was not my profession as a speech-language pathologist, but my avocation as a licensed tour guide, that destined me to cross paths with Gene Brutten. Before his weeklong workshop in Gent on assessment and treatment of stuttering, I was asked to serve as Dr. Brutten's tour guide. After some trepidation – after all I was being asked to guide a “professor” one-on-one for an entire weekend – I accepted the challenge. Instead of meeting the expected prototype of the “stiff professor”, I was greeted by the guy next door who introduced himself as “Hi, I’m Gene” followed immediately by “and today is my birthday”. I will leave my introduction to Gene here, since JFD is not a venue suited to tell the story of our lives. As I have often jokingly remarked, however, “I have guided Gene ever since”, and we became “Martine and Gene, the Belgian-American team”.

After several years and many flights between Belgium and the US, I came ‘temporarily’ to Carbondale in order to pursue my master’s and doctoral degrees. I got to know, like many of you, Dr. Brutten as a teacher, mentor and colleague. In the confinements of Carbondale, which radiated the ambiance of a monastery, we were kept on task by a conscientious, hard-working professor who did not tolerate work half-done and turned and twisted each and every word of a paper until it sounded just right. Equipped with an operational definition, the choice of an appropriate research design, and precise measurement tools, we were guided by a “master of scientific inquiry” as one of his former students remarked so beautifully. Professor Brutten’s standards were high. How often did we hear him say: “OK, show me the evidence”. He was rigorous, tough on himself and on his students, pushing the buttons of critical thinking. He asked a lot of us, but his support was never ending. And then... when he sat in the audience listening to a presentation by one of his academic children, he was one happy academic daddy!

Gene is being described by his master’s and doctoral students as a true mentor and a tough master but also as a friend, even a father. There was Dr. Brutten the professional, who took his task as a mentor seriously. There was a job to be done! Then, there was Gene, the friend, who was there for his students, even after working hours; a warm, caring person. Whether it was to support someone in trouble, to provide a partner for a tennis game, or to enjoy himself at a good party with music and dancing, Gene was there! His reputation at ASHA conventions as “Gene, Gene the dance machine” speaks for itself.

The publication of “The modification of stuttering” with Don Shoemaker, led Gene to receive numerous invitations to share his views on stuttering at many universities on three continents. The book sparked the beginning of many important professional relationships with colleagues on a global scale. Gene’s love for life and what life has to offer greatly expanded when his Fulbright Hays Award brought him to the Netherlands and, after that, to most of Europe. The richness that this

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opportunity brought, on both a personal and professional level, was something for which Gene was always grateful. In a humble way, Gene realized that his colleagues overseas had as much to offer him, as he had to offer them. His working relationships with his colleagues in the Netherlands led to strong and lasting friendships, which Gene cherished greatly. And, his European colleagues certainly embraced their “Two Factor Man”.

One of Gene’s final contributions to the field, in the last decades of his professional life, was his work with, and passion for, the *Journal of Fluency Disorders (JFD)*, which he edited from 1989 to 2000. For Gene, as well as for other colleagues in the area of fluency disorders, it was a great moment when the International Fluency Association (IFA) was born on the Avenue of the Americas in New York City. The establishment of the IFA was indeed a great accomplishment, and Gene treasured the IFA and its official journal, JFD. There is simply no doubt that JFD was near and dear to him.

I think I will end my story here.

As I walked away from Gene on March 4th 2013, I passed the following proverb on the hospital ward’s wall

Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away

Gene couldn’t agree more!

Martine Vanryckeghem

A Tribute to Eugene J. (Gene) Brutten

I last spoke to Gene at the ASHA Convention in 2012 and, although his health had failed considerably since our previous interaction a year or two earlier, I was delighted to observe that his mind was as sharp as ever. Gene had a lust for living, a genuine curiosity, and exacting standards that combined to mold a hard-nosed scientist who was a visionary as well as a caring world citizen.

Of Gene’s numerous major contributions, I will comment on one, founding of the International Fluency Association (IFA). In 1989, as the Editor of the *Journal of Fluency Disorders (JFD)*, Gene presented the idea of forming an “International Fluency Association” (IFA) at a meeting of the Associate Editors. Wishing to take the concept well beyond simply a mechanism desired by the publisher to distribute JFD to members at a lower cost, I offered to help. With Gene’s vision and support in 1990, I conducted a survey of “fluency people” about the need for an international organization and convened preparatory meetings in the USA (Texas) and in The Netherlands (Nijmegen) to solicit input and support. A few months later, with the help of a preliminary cadre of committees, the IFA was officially inaugurated at the ASHA Convention in Seattle, Washington in November, 1990.

Even though I did not study under Gene at Southern Illinois, and in fact was trained at Minnesota under a philosophy that often mixed with his approach to stuttering like oil and water, Gene mentored me. His invitation to me to serve as an Associate Editor of JFD and his subsequent support during the founding stages of the IFA were extremely important landmarks in my professional development. I’ll always be grateful for those opportunities. I’ll also remember fondly the hospitality of Gene and Martine at their Belgian home and the short but wonderful visit last year at ASHA.

Ken St. Louis

In my career as a graduate student (MA, Ph.D.), I was blessed with three exemplary mentors. In that select group, none was more influential than Gene Brutten. Gene would have been an extraordinary teacher in any profession because he combined the best of authority, knowledge, humility, dedication and personal warmth. With that mix, he consistently brought out the best in students. In my case, he taught me science; how to think, act and write. He instilled in me the sort of healthy skepticism, love of hard evidence, and passion for objectivity that define, not just what scientific inquiry is all about, but how to come to terms with the complexities of life. My highest achievements professionally, had Gene’s name stamped all over them. On more than one occasion, I made sure that he knew that I never stopped being grateful, and told him so.

In a relationship that spanned 48 years, we became dear friends, sharing meals, laughs, and our families. Throughout, a level of trust developed such that we could jab each other over our mannerisms and personal foibles, absolutely confident that it was all being done with affection and love. And Gene could give as good as he got.

I believe deeply that we live on in the people whose lives we have touched. In your case, Gene, that means you will be ever close.

With affection,

Marty Adams

It’s 1971. I’m fresh off the streets of Chicago. 8 inch Afro, bell-bottoms, tie-dyed T-shirt. But Gene Brutten saw something in me. He counseled me and guided me through my Bachelor’s degree and Master’s degree programs at

Southern Illinois University (SIU). A haircut and wardrobe change later, through Gene's guidance my Master's thesis was published and I had presented papers at the American Speech Language Hearing Association (ASHA), the California Speech Language and Hearing Association (CSHA), and the American Association of Behavior Therapists (AABT) conventions. I started but did not finish my Ph.D. for personal reasons and much to Gene's dismay. But later I did obtain my J.D. and became a practicing attorney representing disabled children under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Gene was not just a mentor to me. I am not ashamed to say that he was a lot like a father. He helped his youngster(s) avoid academic, career, and personal pitfalls. I am glad that several years before his passing we were able to visit at his home in Gent, Belgium and while he was visiting in Hawaii. Before then, though we occasionally spoke by phone, we had not seen each other in over 30 years. I will miss Gene in the flesh. But his spirit is with me always.

Perry Leonard

Perhaps Dr. Gene Brutten will best be remembered as the "father" of the two-factor learning theory of stuttering as concisely and clearly formulated in a small book (*The Modification of Stuttering*), one that greatly influenced both theoretical and clinical thinking: stuttering being a disorganization in the learned response of fluency because of classically conditioned negative emotion; the maladaptive coping or avoidance behaviors accompanying such a breakdown the result of instrumental/operant conditioning. His two-factor view of stuttering had and continues to have important implications for differential diagnosis in the clinical treatment of stuttering.

As my mentor, Gene was a very tough task master but one who always treated me with respect and on an intellectual par with him throughout the time he was my teacher, thesis and dissertation adviser. He did not expect more from his students than he expected from himself – always a great deal! The most important lesson he instilled in his students was the importance of scientific rigor and objectivity in evaluating theory and data and being a "doubting Thomas" until the proof was shown, time and time again.

David Maxwell

My first contact with Gene was about 40 years ago during his stay at the University of Utrecht, the Netherlands. As a young behavior therapist and confronted with a first stuttering patient, I was very impressed by 'The modification of stuttering', a book that he coauthored with Donald Shoemaker. And it was a great opportunity when I was admitted to Gene's 1972 postdoctoral course on stuttering at the University of Utrecht. A course that was organized during his 9 month Fulbright-Hays scholarship. As a scientist and teacher, Gene impressed us by being very organized, analytical and critical about the research of others and that of himself. But most of all, he was an enthusiastic and warm person with great interest in us.

Leading themes of Gene's research such as 'stuttering is not a unitary behavior', 'put emphasis on definition and measurement', 'the impact of heredity and environment' and last but not least 'the role of negative emotion' became also main themes in my research on stuttering. The discussions we started in those early days were the source of mutual research projects and articles that we shared with Peggy Janssen. For many of us, he opened a window to the USA by facilitating contacts with other leading colleagues, motivating us to present at ASHA conferences and to publish in international journals, which was not common in those days. From the Netherlands and Belgium, several students went to study with Gene at the Southern Illinois University-Carbondale, stayed in the USA and made major contributions to the field. Noteworthy was our last mutual research project which took us many years, resulted in many publications and the PhD thesis 'Onset and course of stuttering in high-risk children' of our student Saskia Kloth.

Over the years, our professional and personal contacts deepened and became more intensive. After Gene's 'second' retirement at the University of Central Florida and my retirement at the University of Nijmegen there was more time for being together, enjoying art, good food, books and making trips around Gent or Nijmegen with our wives. Gene made a great difference in our lives and, by his recently passing away, we miss a dear friend.

Floor Kraaimaat

The first time I met Gene Brutten was in the early seventies when he came to the University Hospital in Utrecht on a Fulbright grant at the invitation of Professor Damsté, head of the Department, where I worked as a research psychologist. I was at the beginning of my career as a speech pathologist and I looked forward to doing research with the great "two-factor man" who had such interesting ideas on the role of classical conditioning in the onset of stuttering.

That year, we did our first study together, an experiment on the effects of punishment on specific stuttering behaviors, which was a controversial topic in stuttering research at that time. I very much enjoyed working with Gene. We had many discussions on theoretical and methodological issues. Gene also made me familiar with a molecular analysis

of stuttering. He very strongly insisted on precise definitions and measurement procedures. That year was more than instructive for me. But, besides working together, we also talked a lot. Gene liked to talk about everything that was of interest to him. And he had many interests. One of the first things that struck me about Gene was his interest in Europe and European culture, particularly history, architecture and painting. He was the most European-minded American I ever met.

I have known Gene for more than 40 years. Throughout all those years he remained a dedicated and inspiring colleague and a very dear friend. He regularly came back to Europe, not only to discuss new research proposals but also to talk with the many friends he had made in Europe. Gene's contributions to the study and treatment of stuttering are well documented. I am sure his work will be widely remembered and appreciated. My personal memories are also plentiful, and certainly of equal value to me.

Peggy Janssen

Current themes in higher education today underscore the importance of teaching students to be critical thinkers and life-long learners. These are traits I learned from Dr. Gene Brutton nearly 40 years ago when he served as my master's thesis advisor at Southern Illinois University. Gene was an exacting advisor who held his students to high standards of independent performance, and was the epitome of a mentor. He believed in his students' skills and abilities and wanted us to excel as students and professionals. While he pushed us to meet his demands, he also supported us in our growth and cared about us as people. Gene obviously had a lasting impact on the field of fluency through his own research and service; he also helped shape the discipline of speech-language pathology through the generations of students he taught so well. Even though I did not continue my work in fluency and my primary contact with Gene occurred in the early 1970s, the lessons I learned from him have stayed with me through my career, and I have always been thankful that I accepted the challenge of doing my master's level work with him.

Gene was a pivotal and foundational presence in my life. I will always remember him with gratitude and warmth.

Ann R. Beck

As a master level graduate student who completed a thesis under Gene's guidance at SIU-Carbondale (1977) I know that Gene was a rigorous mentor while being a kind and generous person. Gene's life work, his extensive research and clinical and academic teaching, continue in the form of his many master and doctoral students who were fortunate enough to call him mentor and friend. Gene's devotion to developing tight research designs for the investigations he supervised and conducted, remains with me today. What I initially learned about research design came from Gene during a period of time when speech pathology was just recognizing the necessity of operational definitions. Gene later mentored me during my pre-doctoral research preparation after his retirement from SIU-C and subsequent relocation to Orlando.

Gene's publication of the "Behavior Assessment Battery for School-age Children who Stutter", with his colleague and spouse, Dr. Martine Vanryckeghem pulled together the many prior years of research that he initiated at SIU-C. The starting point for this tool, as well as the "Communication Attitude Test", were developed at SIU-C during the period when I was enrolled as a graduate student. Desensitization to sound and word fears was a treatment area that Gene focused on when at SIU-C. His graduate students all spent hours in the SIU-C anechoic chamber recording cassette tapes using a script written by Gene and designed for the client to engage in massed trial practice!

I am thankful to have Gene as an academic father!

Charlotte M. Harvey

Gene Brutton began contributing to my professional and personal growth in 1974 when I had the good fortune to study under his direction. He was a gifted mentor and in the ensuing years remained not just a mentor, but also a giving, caring, and supportive friend. While recognized internationally as a researcher and a prominent contributor to the understanding of stuttering behavior, he was also devoted to guiding the clinical skills and professional development of his students. In fact, I will relate a humorous recollection that endeared him to his students. Gene was so actively engaged in mentoring his students that he wired us with an ear level receiving device (aka. "bug in the ear") through which he offered input to the student clinician from his position in the observation room during diagnostic evaluations. The transmission was only as good as the student's proximity to the transmitter. Thus, his input could be regulated by scooting one's chair away from, or closer to, the transmitter that was taped under the table. This tip was passed down to me from another of Gene's students. I shared this memory with Gene during a visit with him in the fall of 2013 and we had a good laugh about it.

Gene was devoted to his students and the clients they served. He was a master of scientific inquiry and cultivated that quest in his students. Gene and his influence lives on in the many who had the privilege of having him in their lives. His contributions stimulated many research questions and brought us closer to an understanding of stuttering.

Melissa C. Bruce

I was one quarter away from flunking out of Undergraduate School when I took Dr. Brutton's "Speech Correction for the Classroom Teacher", a survey course for education majors. He was such an interesting teacher that I actually paid attention, plus the content was so interesting that I began to study! I switched majors and did well, and finished undergrad with the minimum grade point average to get into Graduate School. I didn't even think of that possibility, though, until Gene sat with me and encouraged me to go on – I cried – no one had ever told me I was smart enough or could even finish Undergraduate School. (My twin brother was "the smart one"). Gene then pushed to get me accepted into Grad School and even got me a VRA grant. He believed in me and went out of his way to guide and support me. He is singly responsible for me getting into a profession I have loved for 48 years. He loved his grad students. He loved partying with us. He loved laughing. He loved his profession. He loved his family.

Gene Brutton is truly one of those people who made a huge difference in many people's lives. I'm so glad I was one of them.

Fran Lowry

My acquaintance with Prof. Gene Brutton began in the late 80s when I started my Ph.D. I had to evaluate attitudes of PWS towards their severity of stuttering and towards their emotional reaction to speech situations. While I was looking for an evaluating tool I came across the Speech Situation Checklist (SSC), which was developed by Gene Brutton. The questionnaire was mentioned in a number of papers but I couldn't find it. I approached him by mail and he sent me the questionnaire with other questionnaires that he developed. He also sent other papers he wrote which included data and norms that enabled me to use and compare this to Israeli PWS. Whenever he and his wife mentioned the fact of how their questionnaires were used worldwide, he always mentioned the fact that they were also translated into Hebrew. We can see his generosity through his willingness to share and present. He encouraged knowledge enrichment and research.

Soloman Ibn Gabirol must have been thinking of Gene when he said: "A Wise man, is generous in imparting his knowledge to others, for knowledge is not lessened in the giving."

As years went by, I met Gene in conferences. He knew that I was from Israel and told me about his Jewish roots which went back to his grandmother who was Jewish. This gave me the opportunity to connect to his "past" by bringing songs in the Jewish language.

The passing away of Prof. Gene Brutton is a great loss to the field of stuttering.

Ruth Ezrati

It is an opportunity for me to express what Gene Brutton has meant to me personally, especially since this is through the *Journal of Fluency Disorders*. Over the years, the *Journal* has become the most significant resource devoted to fluency disorders, and Gene has played a significant role in this. He was involved with JFD during its inception and later again to ensure that it would continue its course to where it is today.

This is not where I initially connected with Gene. I was involved as a research staff member in a Fulbright supported study Gene conducted in the Netherlands, and soon after he became my academic mentor as a doctoral student in communication disorders. These have been very good experiences. Even today I look up to him as the ultimate example for how to teach, be involved with students, while looking out for opportunities for students to grow, discover, and reach their own best place. Gene, to his doctoral students, was more like a father figure; I know that many also have experienced this. He wanted his students to do well, and also ... it couldn't be any other way!

Fortunately, Gene could still find out about me getting Full Professor, a goal he had for me for many years. Unfortunately, he would not hear about me becoming ASHA Fellow this year. The two close research colleagues who have nominated me were also among Gene's dearest personal friends. I am sure they will agree if I end this with: "This one is for you Gene"!

Klaas Bakker

With the death of Dr. Gene Brutton, many of us not only have lost a dear friend and colleague but our field also has lost one of its giants. Gene will forever be remembered for his unparalleled contributions to the study of the onset and development of stuttering, in particular by formulating the two-factor theory of stuttering with his colleague Dr. Shoemaker. This conceptual model, which may well be one of the first truly multi-dimensional scientific models of developmental stuttering, revolutionized our thinking and research into this enigmatic fluency disorder.

During his long career, Gene was single-handedly instrumental in educating some of the foremost thinkers and researchers in the field, including Dr. Martin Adams, Dr. Woodruff Starkweather, Dr. Gerald Zimmerman, among many

others. Most recently, he continued his research collaborations well into retirement with his colleague and partner, Dr. Martine Vanryckeghem. Very characteristically, their efforts were focused not only on creating clinically valid assessment instruments, but especially on establishing their validity and reliability.

At a personal level, I will remember Gene as a wonderful mentor and dear friend whose first questions always concerned my family followed with a genuine interest in my latest research, even in the last years when his own health was failing. I will also remember him for his constant support and gentle encouragement when my wife and I were nervous about the decision to leave our secure life in Belgium and enter the PhD program in Carbondale. The trust we put in him at that time proved to be absolutely merited. He was the best and most supportive supervisor a student could ask for, one who even took time to pick us up each Saturday to go grocery shopping when we could not afford a car the first year.

Gene, you will be missed but never forgotten.

Luc De Nil