

Houssay's Heritage

By Enrique T. Segura

Many Argentines—academics and nonacademics, general knowledge as well as science lovers—are debtors and heirs of an amazing compatriot: Bernardo Alberto Houssay. Don Bernardo, as his friends—disciples and colleagues alike—often called him, left a legacy written in capital letters with the creation of institutions devoted to scientific endeavors, including a physiology school of international standing and true national pride.

Nonetheless, in 1943, while full-time professor in the Medical School of the University of Buenos Aires, he was peremptorily laid off by the national peronist government for purely political reasons. To proceed with his research, disciples and benefactors rented a house at Costa Rica Street, in the traditional Almagro quarter of Buenos Aires City. This home was his refuge, the place where he continued with his brilliant work even under very utilitarian conditions. This site would also become the seed for the current IBYME, and it was there that Houssay received the news of his Nobel Prize in October 1947. He had to wait until 1959 for the military government to assign him and his group the present

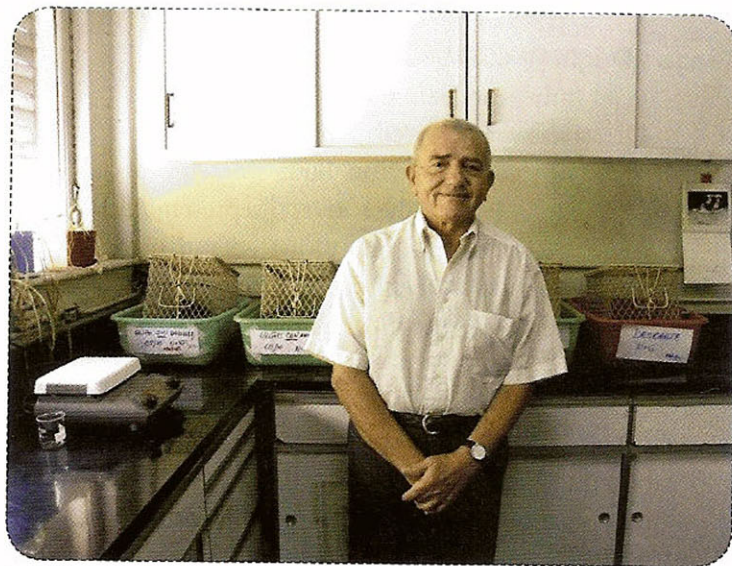


FIGURE 2 Dr. Enrique T. Segura in his laboratory.

building, at the corner of Obligado and Monroe, in the center of the beautiful Belgrano neighborhood. Several research groups soon were distributed in its rooms, including one designated for Don Bernardo with an ample laboratory in the first floor with large windows and a view to an inner garden dominated by a centenary araucaria.

Before this, in 1958, with the creation of the Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas, CONICET (National Research Council), Houssay as its first president had to devote a great deal of his time to demanding organizational and supervising tasks, which, much against his wishes, forced him to participate less in the Institute. Even so, whenever one of his disciples returned from abroad after a fellowship period, a space was reserved for him or her at the Institute—a priority for Houssay. However, when one of these disciples, after two years in France in 1962, found that there was no room for him, Houssay without hesitation reassigned his own space to his young collaborator. That space became the origin of the present Laboratory of Behavioral Biology. Since 2005, a remodeled area containing that original space remains in the hands of other investigators and carries the name of this scientific pioneer, Don Bernardo Alberto Houssay.

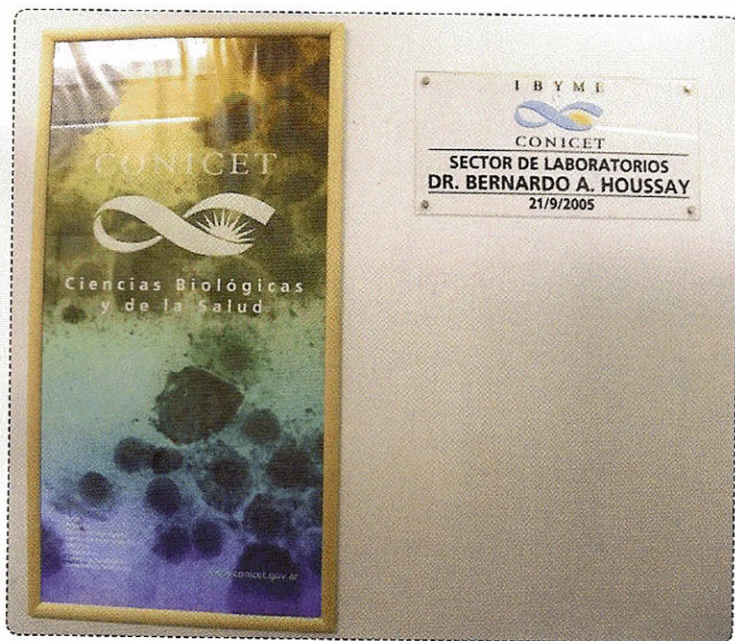


FIGURE 1 Plaque installed in 2005 at the entrance of the area, which was Houssay's original laboratory, at IBYME.

Digital Object Identifier 10.1109/MPUL.2010.937253