

KATE BÁRÁNY GRADUATE STUDENT AWARD ANTHOLOGY:

This collection of remembrances and remarks by awardees of the Kate Bárány Award is dedicated in loving memory of Kate Bárány. Michael and Kate Bárány made large contributions to their respective departments (Department of Biochemistry and Department of Physiology) and to the University of Illinois at Chicago as a whole during their time in Chicago. They were valued members of the academic community who were noted for their dedication to both research and teaching. The awardees included in this anthology were a few of the many students who the Báránys helped and inspired in their careers. It is the hope of the UIC Departments of Physiology and Biochemistry Faculty and the Kate Bárány Awardees that the legacy of the Báránys be continued and that future awardees are included here.

List of Kate Bárány Graduate Student Award Winners:

- 1998 – Miroslav O. Stojanovic*
- 1999 – Christian C. Evans*
- 2000 – Michael C. Risk*
- 2001 – Veronica L. Rundell*
- 2002 – Roli Prasad*
- 2003 – Haytham Mansour*
- 2004 – Aurora Shehu*
- 2005 – Patti Engel*
- 2006 – Sarah Scruggs*
- 2007 – Witchuda Saengsawang*
- 2008 – Yalda Afshar*
- 2009 – Jamie Le*
- 2010 – Sudarat Nimitvilai*
- 2011 – Jill Bennet*

Miroslav O. Stojanovic

Award date: 1998

Miroslav (Mikki) Stojanovic, MD, was a graduate student in the UIC Department of Physiology from 1992 through 1997. Shortly before he could return from a residency to defend his dissertation, Mikki and his wife Shari passed away tragically in a car accident. Mikki was awarded the Ph.D. as well as the Kate Barany Award posthumously in 1998. Mikki's research brought him into contact with both Kate and Michael Barany and he was close to both, but especially fond of Kate. As a graduate student teaching assistant, Mikki helped Kate Barany with her lectures on skeletal muscle. Like both Michael and Kate, Mikki was a student not only of science, but also of scientists and the history of science. He had a deep appreciation of the Barany's many contributions to muscle biology and physiology and would have been greatly honored to have been the first recipient of the Kate Barany award (picture provided by Beata Wolska, Ph.D., narrative provided by Christian Evans, Ph.D.)



Christian C. Evans

Award date: 1999

As a new grad student in the Department of Physiology and Biophysics at UIC, I was assigned as a Teaching Assistant to Dr. Kate Bárány for the Physiology course. I had heard stories about grad school and academia and I fully expected a tough and extremely rigid professor who was all business. Obviously Dr. Kate Bárány was not at all like that. She was warm, friendly, and very enthusiastic about teaching and actually wanted to get to know me!

I started the PhD program at UIC at the age of 36 as a second career/older student and was not at all confident in my abilities to keep up with all the new grads. Dr. Kate Bárány helped to ease my fears that very first semester, telling me that if I worked hard, I would be fine. She was very encouraging and made me feel like the department was my home and not a school. I would often see Kate at the UIC pool since we were both swimmers and she would say "swimming is so good for de health." She told me quite a lot about her life and by the end of that year, I thought I knew this woman pretty well: serious scientist, dedicated to the students and teaching, kind and sincere person who was a caring wife and mother. Then that next year Kate Bárány was given the "UIC Woman of the Year" award. During that time I learned more about Michael and Kate. It was so hard to imagine all of the things during World War II happening to such wonderful people! But it was also very inspiring to have a teacher, a friend and mentor who overcame so much and went on to do so much good in her life.



One of the most important lessons I learned from both Michael and Kate was that we can rise above even the worst things life can throw at you. Not just that, but maybe kindness and connecting with people are the keys that allow you to overcome that kind of hardship in your life. This is one of those lessons that I didn't learn right away: years later I think about them and it is still sinking in. Michael and Kate were both huge inspirations in my life and left an amazing legacy through their science and through all of the lives they touched at UIC. I'm honored to have received this award and especially honored that I was able to receive it in person from Dr. Kate Bárány herself!

Michael Risk

Award date: 2000

My first exposure to Kate Bárány was in my first semester in medical school, where she taught muscle physiology with enthusiasm that was infectious. Physiology was always a favorite course of medical students during the first year, and a large part of that was due to the efforts of Kate and others to deliver lectures with energy and a smile. When I later entered graduate school I got to know both Kate and Michael on a personal level. I often would run into them in the hallways, particularly Michael on the weekends. They would frequently ask about my progress in graduate school and with experiments, as well as my plans for the future. They were often a source for advice and encouragement, which was always appreciated. As much as I learned from their advice, I also learned from their example. They both had a passion for science which was inspirational during times of frustration. During my last year of graduate work I learned that I would receive the Kate Bárány Award, and I wasn't sure if she had picked the right person as "well organized" was not a phrase often used to describe me. I still have the plaque in my office, as well as a picture with Kate taken on the night I received the award. I was then and continue to be honored to have received the award, and even more so honored to have gotten to know Drs. Kate and Michael Bárány.



Veronica Rundell

Award date: 2001

Reflecting upon the Báránys, both Michael and Kate, brings both satisfaction and heartache. Being a student in the late '90s, I was one of the last few who actually had both as instructors; both in the muscle physiology class that was Kate's passion and in the cardiovascular systems course where they each lectured. While I truly adored them in class, I am eternally grateful to have known them as friends.

I entered the graduate program three months pregnant and scared out of my mind that continuing school was a horrible mistake. Kate, always the woman's advocate, was extremely supportive of my role as full-time student and full-time mother. She would always ask how my son was, and reminded me (often) that he needed a brother. Being neighbors, I would walk with Kate while taking my son to the park, or escort her to Conte di Savoia for a loaf of 'the good bread' because Michael forbade her from crossing streets with her diminished eyesight. Many days I would find her on the corner of Ashland and Polk waiting to greet Michael after a day in the lab and we would chat about everything. Motherhood, career, studies, the weather, how she was feeling—she loved to chat and I loved to listen.



I had the extreme pleasure to be a teacher to Michael in the lab. Always ready to study a new hypothesis, he came to the de Tombe lab to learn how to prepare fresh heart samples. Over several weeks he learned the proper way to handle the tissue so the heart would continue beating and he could take measures. I helped him set up a prep lab in his own research space and occasionally checked in with him when I popped into the old COM. For him, experimentation was a state of joy and I was grateful to assist him.

I'll never forget the day of my thesis defense when I announced my second pregnancy. Kate gave me a big hug and then bumped me on the shoulder. "You told me I would be the first to know!" she scolded. Then she gave me another hug and Michael gave me a kiss.

I still keep the signed copy of their manuscript detailing the adversity in their lives, and the Kate Bárány Award has followed me to every apartment and office I've held in the past 12 years. But I don't need either to remind me how wonderful they were as teachers, scientists or friends. Their remarkable lessons of love, companionship and family are as much a part of me as actin and myosin.

Roli Prasad

Award date: 2002

Drs. Kate and Michael Bárány were two of the most remarkable people that I have ever known. I feel very fortunate that I had the opportunity to know them for they have been an inspiration on both a professional and a personal level. I first encountered both Drs. Bárány many years ago when I was in medical school. Unfortunately, the medical curriculum did not allow for individual contact between the students and the professors, but even then Drs. Kate and Michael Bárány stood out in the quality of their lectures. It was not until I was a graduate student in the Department of Physiology & Biophysics that I truly had the opportunity to get to know them more closely. In the beginning, I was completely in awe of them as, from all that I heard about them from the faculty, students, and staff of the Department of Physiology & Biophysics, they were living legends for their many accomplishments in their respective fields and their dedication to science and knowledge.

Dr. Kate Bárány retired soon after I joined the department, but I remember her as being such a warm and gracious lady. Before, and for many years after her retirement, she was a strong presence at the various department events, and she always made an effort to speak to each of the students. It was very encouraging to me, as a graduate student, to have an esteemed faculty member such as her to know who I was and to take an interest in me and my progress. Over the years, as I learned more and more about Dr. Kate Bárány, my respect for her continued to grow. I remember hearing about how well she balanced her personal life as a wife and mother with her dedication to her research and teaching. She was a pioneer in so many ways and such an exceptional role model for female students. I remember hearing once that she was one of the few women scientists in the sciences when she joined the university and that she fought to ensure that separate bathrooms were set up for women in the College of Medicine building. I also remember the occasions when Dr. Bárány retired and when the departmental library was named in her honor. Through these occasions and also the memories of her life that she shared in an article in the departmental newsletter, I was able to learn about her personal past as a survivor of the Holocaust. I remember being particularly moved by her description of being a young girl when her grandmother was taken away by the Nazis. I was amazed by her inner strength and inspired by her many achievements despite all of the obstacles that she faced in her life. By the time that I graduated, Dr. Kate Bárány's health had begun to decline and so I did not see her as often as I had in the beginning. However I still remember and treasure those moments when I did see her for her smile, her strength of character, and her kind towards me.

Although Dr. Michael Bárány was a member of the Department of Biochemistry, I am grateful that I did have the opportunity to get to know him as well. He was an inspiration to me for many of the same reasons as Dr. Kate Bárány: his dedication to his research and his many accomplishments despite his personal struggles. I was amazed to see the zeal with which he pursued his research despite the limitations of lab space, funds, and lab personnel. As his laboratory neighbored ours, I had the privilege of assisting him with some of his experiments. I had heard about his meticulousness, and I was able to observe this first-hand from his precise technique in carrying out the steps of the experiments to his detailed notebook in which he carefully wrote as we proceeded. Similar to Dr. Kate Bárány, he also always made a point to stop me when we passed each other in the hallway to ask me about my progress and my work. In 2002, I had the great honor to receive the Department of Physiology and Biophysics Kate Bárány Graduate Student Award. It was such a special occasion for me and a highlight in my graduate career to receive this award. I later learned that Drs. Kate and Michael Bárány

personally participated in the selection of the awardee and that the award check was from their personal contributions, which made the award even more meaningful to me and I will be eternally grateful to both of them for their generosity. After I graduated from University of Illinois at Chicago, I would occasionally hear about the Drs. Bárány from the members of the department, and I was greatly saddened to hear of their declining health and then, in 2011, to learn that they had both passed away. Despite my sorrow in hearing of their passing, I was immediately struck by the fact that Dr. Michael Bárány had only survived Dr. Kate Bárány by about one month. The love and devotion which Drs. Kate and Michael Bárány so obviously felt for each other is one of the sweetest memories that I have of them, and whenever I picture them in my mind, they are always walking together, hand-in-hand. It is not often that one has the privilege of meeting such extraordinary people as Drs. Kate and Michael Bárány, and I am very grateful that I not only had the opportunity to meet these living legends but also to know the kind, generous, and inspirational individuals that they were.



Hytham Mansour

Award date: 2003

I received the Kate Bárány award as a PhD student at the University of Illinois at Chicago Department of Physiology and Biophysics. I was honored to receive an award signifying the best in science and I feel privilege knowing Dr. Kate Bárány. During my time at UIC I also had the pleasure of learning many muscle protocols from Dr. Michael Barany. The award was the highlight of my graduate career. It meant a great deal to me and I was happy to have been given the award from Dr. Kate Bárány herself.

I am a Podiatrist employed as an Associate with the Union Associated Physicians Medical Group in Terre Haute, Indiana. I work with the same enthusiasm the Báránys had in their own careers. Their work was a reflection of their personalities. I would never characterize their work as consuming them, but was rather an extension of who they were as people. I had never seen two people that were more in sync with each other. They almost seemed to feed of each other's affection for their work and each other. They led their lives with integrity and professionalism. They were a great example to me of how best to be successful, but more importantly, happy in life. I am happy to know that they are once again together, holding hands, enjoying each other's company. I will always remember how they helped me and will try to pass on what they taught me to others.



Aurora Shehu

Award date: 2004

I remember being quite excited and nervous as a first year graduate student and then I met Drs. Bárány. They both said hello and we started a conversation, and before I knew it, I was laughing and felt like myself. I was mesmerized as they shared their passion for science and life. Dr. Kate Bárány told me with a motherly look that the road ahead will not be easy but I needed to enjoy everything in life in addition to excel and have a good scientific career. In the years to follow every time I saw her, she would smile and always make time to sit down and discuss things from politics, movies, exercise, food and science. She always had fruits and treated me to fresh apples and grapes. She had the gift of listening and guiding you gently. It was a great honor to receive Dr. Kate Bárány Award as I continue my journey to finish medical school; I have taken her advice per heart of trying to enjoy moments that life throws at you.



Patti Engel

Award date: 2005

My path to graduate school at UIC was somewhat different than most students. It started by going to Pharmacy school in the mid to late 1970's, when perhaps my fellow graduate students were toddlers or before they were even born! Although equality for women in the working world was a hot topic back then, as a young woman I found that I was still in the minority of a male-dominated pharmacy program as were most science based careers. I faced some opposition from certain professors along the way who held the belief that pharmacy should be practiced by men, not women. However I know the opposition I saw in the 1970's pales in comparison to that which Kate Bárány would have experienced in the 1950's and 1960's. And yet she persevered. With the support and encouragement of her husband, Michael, they went on to discover and define much of what we know of muscle physiology fundamentals today. And she raised a family as well! When I see an example like Kate, how could I not be spurred on to continue on my own path?

During my time at UIC, I didn't have the opportunity to work with Kate as her health and eyesight had begun to fail. But I did have the chance to work with Michael, assisting him for a brief period for his lecture preparations for Cell Biology. In my years as a pharmacist, I worked with many elderly patients and know that they have a charm of their own. For Michael, his body was aging, but he knew exactly what was going on. To him, it didn't matter if I was young or old, male or female. I remember he asked a question regarding actin and myosin interaction to me and a fellow student. Fortunately I knew the answer and he responded with an enthusiastic "You are the winner!" I was encouraged by this and many other positive examples of his teaching. I am reminded of this often now as it is my turn to teach my students about physiology.

Although I didn't have the opportunity to work with Kate, on the night the award was given to me, she told me she was so happy to see another woman excel in a science career. Coming from Kate Bárány, that's high praise indeed. I will always be grateful for the time spent with such an inspiring couple and I will always be proud to be one of the Kate Bárány Award recipients.



Sarah Scruggs

Award date: 2006

There are few people that can imprint one's heart like Michael and Kate Bárány. I realized this from the very moment I met them. I had the pleasure of getting to know Michael quite well, as I served as a teaching assistant for his Biochemistry of Muscle Contraction graduate student course. I wish I had saved the preparatory emails he sent weeks prior to the course, but unfortunately I did not. I had never received more clear and specific instruction—down to the most excruciating detail—than I did from Michael Bárány in preparation for his course. I knew from my very first interaction with him that this man was a man that practiced science with the utmost sincerity and respect for the field, and that he held academic learning environments to a standard unreached by most.

Michael was the quintessential scientist. His life was like clockwork. He would arrive at work every day at the same time, promptly position his lab coat on his shoulders, and enthusiastically begin the day's work that he had outlined the previous day. He would tirelessly record all the day's events in a hard-bound lab notebook, toiling over every minuscule detail to make sure that it accurately reflected his observations. If he encountered an error, he would stop the experiment, critically evaluate what had happened, and start over from the beginning. Reading through his manuscripts, it was evident that he realized just how much every single word was worth.

In addition to the internationally recognized pioneering efforts and seminal contributions that Michael and Kate were known for, they were first class scientists on a personal level, and encouraged all those who they came in contact with to follow suit. They exemplified the "do as I do" principle, in that they held themselves to the same, if not higher, standard which they held their colleagues to.

The bottom line is that I and others are better scientists because we knew Michael and Kate Bárány, and if that is not a most profound legacy, then I'm not sure what is.



Witchuda Saengsawang

Award date: 2007

It was a great honor for me to receive the Kate Barany award in 2007. At that time I was in the fourth year of my Ph.D., the year that my research was filled with obstacles. Receiving this award meant a lot since it encouraged me to continue to work hard and believe in myself. With this great motivation I made it through those hard times. Looking back from today I am proud of myself and couldn't feel more appreciative of everything Dr. Barany gave me including this award that made me who I am.

Beside my research, I have a great passion for teaching. Although I never had the opportunity to be one of Kate's lucky students, many of them described with enthusiasm how excellent a teacher Kate was. These memories will continue to inspire me in the future. I will soon pursue my research and teaching career as a faculty at the Department of Physiology, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand. I am now ready to pass on these great experiences and beautiful memories to my own students in near future.

Thanks you very much again for honoring me with this award.



Yalda Afshar

Award date: 2008

In memory and gratitude to Kate and Michael Bárány,

I have had the good fortune to cross paths with the Bárány family during my years at the University of Illinois. Additionally, I was humbled when given the Kate Bárány Award in 2008 during graduate school in the Department of Physiology and Biophysics – what an honor!

Dr. Bárány was physically and emotionally present at a multitude of departmental gatherings where we crossed paths. She was a symbol of strength, cohesion and energy for the department. I vividly remember her leaning over telling me “it’s going to be an even wilder journey after this (graduate school)” right after the picture (below) was taken (2008).

I completed my medical and graduate training at the University of Illinois at Chicago. My PhD research was conducted with Dr. Asgi Fazleabas investigating the molecular mechanisms underlying embryonic implantation. These studies were part of a larger goal of elucidating the biological basis involved in fertility and gynecological disorders. At present, I am looking forward to beginning an Obstetrics and Gynecology residency program at Cedars Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, California. From there, I aspire to remain in academia and complete a fellowship in Reproductive Endocrinology and Fertility with aspirations of coupling clinical research with the operating room. Specifically, I am interested in a clinical and research career investigating social determinants of disease and global family-planning issues. I completed my undergraduate degrees in Molecular Cell Biology, Anthropology, and Evolutionary Biology from UC Berkeley and following graduation worked on a field-site in southern Peru and subsequently went on as a Pre-Doctoral training fellow at the NIH before moving to Chicago.

I feel such privilege that I got to know Kate and Michael Bárány and have no doubt that I will continue in their footsteps -- continuing to teach, inspire and support trainees in any shape, size and form possible. Thank you Bárány family for having been in my life. I am a better scientist and advocate because of your presence.

In Peace and Health.



Jamie Le

Award date: 2009

The Bárány: Scientific Icons of Our Time. In the fall of 2004, I had joined the Department of Physiology and Biophysics at UIC and each day I remember seeing Dr. Michael Bárány walking through the hallway wearing his suit (sometimes lab coat) carrying a briefcase headed to his office. I always thought to myself, "Wow...now that's a truly dedicated scientist. Maybe one day I'll be like that". At the time I was unacquainted with the Bárány legacy. Over the years, however, I learned of the important scientific discoveries and the universal impact Michael and Kate had made in the scientific community. As a student, my interactions with the Bárány was minimal, but I heard many stories of how they were true champions of education and really pushed students to work hard in pursuit of their goals and scientific achievements.

The Bárány's passion and pride was highly represented each year at the annual awards ceremonies. Every year they attended and congratulated the students for their work and dedication to science. In 2009, I was the fortunate recipient of the Kate Bárány Graduate Student Award. It was a moment that I will never forget. After shaking my hand and taking a few photos, Dr. Kate Bárány leaned over and said how nice it was to have a woman recipient and congratulated me. Her enthusiasm really echoed her constant advocacy for women in science. She had been a scientist at a time when men dominated the field and she prevailed, making groundbreaking discoveries. She has always stood out in my mind as a role model: a phenomenal, strong, and positive female scientist, never fearing to let her voice be heard. Her impact on students, as well as faculty, will long be lived.

The Bárány's overcame adversity and achieved great success as scientists. To me, Drs. Michael and Kate Bárány, are important and enduring symbols: scientific icons of our time. They define the word scientist and their legacy, not just as scientists, but as wonderful people, have made a true impact on all those around them and will leave a lasting effect for years to come. I hold them dear to my heart and am thankful to have met them.



Sudarat Nimitvilai

Award date: 2010

After completing my doctoral degree with Dr. Mark Brodie in 2011, I have been continuing my postdoctoral research fellow in the same laboratory. My research focuses on mechanisms underlying the desensitization of dopamine D2 receptors in the ventral tegmental area neurons, one of the target areas that participate in the mediation of reward and reinforcing properties of numerous drugs of abuse. We discovered that prolonged application of dopamine causes a decrease in the inhibitory effect of D2 receptors, which we termed dopamine inhibition reversal (DIR). Surprisingly, we found that G-protein Gq, phospholipase C and protein kinase C are involved in the occurrence of DIR, while G-protein Gs, cAMP and protein kinase A are not required for this phenomenon to be produced. We also demonstrated that ethanol can disrupt the effect of protein kinase C on this desensitization mechanism. We are currently examining whether other neurotransmitters including stress hormone corticotrophin releasing factor play a role in mediating DIR.

I had a chance to visit Dr. Kate at her apartment while she was sick. Even though it took just a few minutes, I could catch her sense of humor and how nice she was. I think we both have something in common. Dr. Kate liked to exercise. She went to swim at the UIC pool once in a while regardless how busy she was with her work. I like to exercise too and have to do it almost every day. Thank you to my boss Dr. Brodie who allows me to take a break from work and go to gym during the middle of the day. It was my honor to receive the Kate Bárány Award in 2010. On the award it says "In recognition of a graduate student who is diligent, conscientious, punctual, well organized, and displays a high degree of integrity" made me wonder whether I was really deserved it. But this award has encouraged me to work harder in order to be deserving of it. I am deeply sorry for losing Dr. Kate and Dr. Michael Bárány last year.



Jill Bennet

Award date: 2011

Dear Bárány Family,

I wish to express my condolences for the loss of Kate and Michael in this passing year. I remember seeing both of them at the Physiology and Biophysics awards night in the previous year and Kate was shushing Michael during someone's talk. It warmed my heart and made me laugh because it reminded me of my grandparents who have been married for over 50 years and you could tell from their interactions just how much they deeply cared and loved one another.



Learning about the challenges and obstacles Kate and Michael had to overcome and their perseverance, drive to succeed and achievement is inspiring. I am deeply grateful for being the most recent recipient of the Kate Bárány Award from the Department of Physiology and Biophysics. As my name was called, I was absolutely stunned and honored to receive such a prestigious award. I hope to live up to all the attributes ascribed by that award of being diligent, conscientious, punctual, well organized and displaying a high degree of integrity and hope to be able to carry that tool set with me throughout my career in science.

As I aspire to become a professor within the reproductive physiology field, I look to women in science for inspiration to aim high and to do my best. I can honestly say that one of those women I look up to is Kate as she exemplified a high quality of character. I am on track to graduate with my PhD in the spring of 2013 from the lab of Dr. Carlos Stocco and I believe that there are many more years ahead of me in my career where I hope to someday inspire others just as Kate and Michael have done so for me.