

## In Memoriam: Dickson Despommier

Dickson Despommier, Honorary Member of the ICT community, passed away 6 February 2025 at the age of 84. Dickson was a microbiologist, ecologist, and a great parasitologist. He was especially well known for his research on the *Trichinella* nurse cell and endless energy in writing and teaching about *Trichinella*. Dickson was a professor in Public Health and Ecology at Columbia University in New York and was for many years in a row deemed teacher of the year in the US. It is simply too much to recount all his achievements in parasitology. Dickson was very active; his books, lectures on YouTube, 'This Week in Parasitism' podcast and many presentations were famous worldwide. Young researchers interested in *Trichinella* can learn a lot listening to his videos and scrolling through the different topics on his website <https://www.trichinella.org>.

The last time Dickson joined the ICT conference was as an invited speaker at the ICT-15 meeting in Cluj, Romania. Together with his wife Marlene, they appreciated the country and very much enjoyed being at the ICT conference with us. Together with Peter Thompson, Benjamin Rosenthal, Dickson and Marlene impressed during the ICT song festival event at the winery party event, as representatives of the US.

Dickson was also considered the creative founder of the modern agricultural concept 'vertical farming' with the development of indoor, multi-story farming. Vertical farming has since grown into a key component of sustainable urban agriculture. Dickson's ideas and vision for vertical farming were born from a desire to address food security, reduce agricultural waste, and bring food production into cities, and his ideas helped shift the global conversation on sustainable agriculture and food production. He was asked to give worldwide lectures about vertical farming and his vision influenced agriculture, architecture, and sustainability initiatives and inspired a new generation of scientists, entrepreneurs, and urban planners. His work was even featured in mainstream magazines such as The New Yorker and Time. His passing marks the end of an era, but his vision for sustainable urban agriculture will endure through continued advancements in vertical farming and agricultural technology. For the ICT community, we lost an inspiring *Trichinella* scientist, dear colleague and friend in parasitology. Maybe less known is that Dickson was also an artist in photography and painting. During ICT in San Diego in 2004, where Dickson was one of the invited speakers, he told me he was in for a good glass of Chardonnay, since he really enjoyed the good things of life. We drove in his convertible to the beach to not only drink a glass of wine but also talked about our common passion, ART. Especially Johannes Vermeer, one of his favorite Dutch painters. Dickson visited The Netherlands several times and he inspired young and older colleagues with lectures not only about *Trichinella* but also about emerging zoonoses and drivers of emergence of infectious disease. He introduced the term ecotones, and of course his work on vertical farming.

Although very good memories, we all will miss Dickson dearly.

Joke van der Giessen  
ICT past president 2015-2019