

OBITUARY

Professor Mikael Braend



Professor Mikael Braend, Oslo, died after a short illness on 4 December, 1988 at the age of 67. He was an honorary member of the International Society for Animal Genetics (ISAG) and one of the founders of the two societies (ESABR and ISABR) preceding ISAG. Mikael Braend was born on a small farm in eastern Norway. He studied veterinary medicine in Oslo and graduated as a veterinarian in 1948. After working in veterinary practice he became research assistant at the medical clinics of the Veterinary College in Oslo, specializing in infectious diseases and immunology. In 1951 he received a fellowship to study animal blood groups and immunogenetics in Professor Irwin's laboratory, Madison, Wisconsin. This study period introduced him into the field of research to which he would dedicate most of his future life. Upon his return to Oslo Mikael Braend was given the opportunity to establish a laboratory for animal blood group research at the Veterinary College, where he carried out both service work and research. His doctoral thesis, *Blood groups of cattle in Norway: serological and genetical studies*, published in 1959, made him an authority on cattle blood groups and their use in studies of breed structure and similarities between breeds. This work was followed by a study on Icelandic cattle, which through their isolation for more than 1000 years, provided a useful material for analyses of genetic drift and isolation effects. In spite of the long separation the Icelandic cattle showed great similarity (particularly within the complex B system) to the Norwegian Landraces from which they were supposed to have originated.

Mikael Braend became one of the pioneers in applying electrophoretic techniques to studies of biochemical polymorphism in livestock. He was the first to describe a number of protein polymorphisms in several livestock species. During the early 1960s Mikael Braend got the opportunity to work in Clyde Stormont's laboratory in California, which led to a fruitful collaboration and a lasting friendship. Together they were the first to describe genetic polymorphism of transferrin in the horse. Mikael Braend had a large number of colleagues working in his own laboratory in Oslo for periods of varying duration.

Mikael Braend had personal characteristics which made him the natural leader in international work and scientific collaboration. He had a subtle sense of humour and

was modest and honest. Personally I got to know him in Professor Irwin's laboratory in 1952. We were three Scandinavians in the lab at the same time (Mike Braend, Agner Neimann-Sørensen and myself). Naturally we became great friends and when back in our respective countries we continued to cooperate by comparing and exchanging ideas and blood grouping reagents. This early exchange grew into an informal network, which arranged annual comparison tests (the first one in Copenhagen in 1954). Mikael Braend became the natural coordinator. At our 7th meeting (Edinburgh, 1960) we started to discuss the formation of a European society and in 1964 (Prague) the European Society for Animal Blood Group Research was formally established, with Mikael Braend as chairman.

During his period as chairman (1964–72) Mikael Braend was instrumental in starting the journal *Animal Blood Groups and Biochemical Genetics* (now *Animal Genetics*) and to prepare for change of the European society into the International Society on Animal Blood Group Research (ISABR). The scope of the Society grew to include practically all species of livestock and also fish. It further became more and more involved in questions of biochemical genetics.

As chairman of ESABR Mikael Braend was given many opportunities to use and refine his inborn skill for diplomacy, tact and good judgement, characteristics which proved to be very useful to him in his many other international engagements. During 1968–72 he was Professor and Head of the Department of Animal Production at the University of Nairobi, Kenya. His colleagues elected him Dean of the Veterinary Faculty and he came to serve during a period when the leadership of the faculty changed from mainly European to largely Kenyan. In 1975–78 he held a position at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, FAO, Rome, where he was responsible for veterinary education and the development of veterinary research. He was an honorary member of Società Italiana delle Scienze Veterinarie.

Personally, I had the privilege to cooperate closely with Mikael Braend for more than 35 years in research projects, in the European network, in Society matters and for a period also in Rome. Mikael Braend was a man to trust. Although basically a serious person he could also be great fun. In our Society he was always known just as Mike. At our Conference dinners, he was an untiring waltzer and socially he was good company and an entertaining story-teller. Personally I will also remember him as a friendly tennis partner, whom I could never beat. However, in spite of all his international contacts, engagements and achievements he remained a skilful laboratory man who liked to work with his own hands. He was busy at his laboratory bench until early November when he went to hospital for what he thought would involve some minor treatment or operation, but which turned out to be incurable cancer.

Mike will be kept in good memory by many friends all over the world.

JAN RENDEL
Uppsala, March 1989