

ILAE INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF EPILEPTIC SEIZURES

One of Gastaut's most enduring achievements was to create and launch the *International Classification of Epileptic Seizures*. He realised that a uniform classification and definition of epileptic seizures was fundamental to international collaboration and study of the disease, and he worked single-mindedly to create a scheme which would stand the test of time. The conception of the classification was largely his, and Gastaut promoted the scheme with tremendous energy and enthusiasm. His adept political maneuvering resulted in the production of a classification scheme which came to be approved both by the ILAE and also the worldwide communities of neurology and neurophysiology. The work started at the Marseilles Colloquium in 1964 where Gastaut produced the first draft and culminated at the 1969 ILAE meeting in New York where the General Assembly of the ILAE approved the scheme. The pace was punishing and in the days before the New York meeting, agreement on the scheme was far from close. A closed meeting was held and Merlis described the scene: *'The initial period could be described as chaotic, with many divergent approaches being presented and with frequent interruptions of speakers by, sometimes, rather warm disagreement. Nevertheless, as time went on, a core of agreement on certain basic principles seemed to emerge ... I think I can say that, despite being hoarse and tired at the end of the day, many, if not all, of the participants felt that it had been an instructive, productive and exhilarating experience'*

The classification has since become adopted worldwide and is only now under radical revision. Gastaut had the vision to badge the classification scheme with the ILAE name, and in so doing made a major contribution to the establishment of the ILAE as the dominant worldwide body in the field of epilepsy.



Henri Gastaut (front row, centre) with participants at the 1964 Marseille Colloquium