

# FRED DREIFUSS

Fritz (Fred) Emanuel Dreifuss (1926–1997) was a much-loved figure at the centre of the epilepsy world. He was born in Dresden, Germany, and as a child escaped with his family, first to South Africa and then to New Zealand. He received his medical degree from the University of Otago, and did further studies at the National Hospital Queen Square in London before moving to the University of Virginia in Charlottesville in 1959 where he specialised in seizure disorders. In the 1960s he began working on epilepsy projects with the National Institutes of Health, and when Kiffin Penry came on the scene, Dreifuss became his closest collaborator. The Comprehensive Epilepsy Program which Dreifuss developed in Virginia under the aegis of the NIH became a model for centres worldwide. His investigations of absence seizures greatly enhanced understanding of them. He served on the ILAE's Commission on Classification and Terminology from 1977 until his death, and for most of that time was its chair. Dreifuss became secretary-general of the League in 1981 and its president in 1985. Under his astute leadership, the ILAE began to be more consequential as an international organisation, particularly through the growth of working commissions and the democratisation of the election process. Dreifuss naturally formed strong friendships, and people liked being around him. Everyone has a Dreifuss story. He was refreshingly plain-spoken and was a master of *le mot juste*, an attribute as rare as it was useful in navigating the political waters of the international epilepsy movement. He was a powerful advocate for patients and for epilepsy. Despite his success, he considered himself primarily a clinician and was deeply committed to his patients, and they adored him. The author of this poster remembers well, whilst a visiting fellow with Fred, being driven by Dreifuss in his old estate car for many hours to do outreach clinics in the outback wilderness of the Blue Mountains – where he seemed to know everyone and where everyone welcomed him as a long-lost friend.



Two ILAE preesidents Roger Porter and Fred Dreifuss (on the right)