

Tribute to Claude Michaud

"To understand me, you have to understand the Fire Rat".

Claude Michaud, 1935-2014

Claude Michaud's own, often-repeated recommendation recalled above by CEDEP's current Director, Jens Meyer, is probably the best route to decoding the 'Claude' remembered by those who knew and cherished him over so many years. His Asian roots, as former CEDEP President Igor Landau observed, made him "atypical in so many ways, which is what also made him unique". Thus the 'Claude effect' that people recall is inextricably linked to his background and, as Claude firmly believed, to his birth in the year of the Rat.

According to Chinese astrology, Rat people are born under the sign of charm and aggression. Other notable Rats include Alexander the Great, George Washington, John F. Kennedy, Wolfgang Mozart, William Shakespeare, Heinrich Himmler, Truman Capote, Catherine the Great, Mata Hari, Idi Amin, Marlon Brando, Eminem, Diego Maradona, Zinedine Zidane and the Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi. Many would say that Claude's life and achievements would easily assure him a place in this pantheon.

Of the elements associated with the Rat birth sign Claude was a Fire Rat, someone who loves a challenge and always adds a sense of fun and adventure to their activities. Known for being hardworking, ruthless and expressive, resourceful and versatile; it is rare to catch a Rat sitting quietly. Their strong intuition and quick responses mean they can adapt to strange environments, while their curiosity enables them to take advantage of any new opportunity. Ambitious, intelligent, persuasive, charismatic, shrewd, tenacious and eloquent are some of the other adjectives associated with this sign. The fact that many of the tributes sent by his friends described Claude in exactly these terms is something that he, with his attachment to Chinese astrology, would have relished.



Born in Saigon into a poor family but to a mother who instilled in Claude the notion that he should always come top, Claude's background forged him. In his teens he came to France, where his hostile reception and struggle to win the education that would earn him a doctorate reinforced both his fighting spirit and feeling of being an outsider in this new world. These two characteristics fueled his success, and were patently visible in his subsequent career as an academic and as CEDEP's driving force. In 2010, his mother would have been proud to see her 'outsider' son receive the Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Mérite from the CEDEP President, François Vachey.

Claude and CEDEP

Inevitably, many tributes recalled Claude's contribution to the development and success of CEDEP and the indelible mark he left on it. Typical was L'Oréal's Philippe Louvet's observation that, "Some men engrave their name on an Institution...Claude, with his intellectual rigour and constant concern for the development of managers and organisations, inscribed his name on the memory of CEDEP and all his friends at L'Oréal". For former CEDEP Board member George Starcher, Claude was "gifted with many personal and academic qualities" and left behind "an indelible imprint on the institution, as well as on the many professors, participants, alumni, sponsors and company executives". INSEAD Honorary Chairman Claude Janssen, wrote of Claude's "ceaseless efforts to develop CEDEP" and how he was "very effective in defending CEDEP's interests", a reference to the endemic battles played out between INSEAD and its smaller but noisy neighbour. Former faculty member Bill Braddick was in no doubt: "Claude built a unique institution. He brought to the task an armoury of skills - diplomacy, influence, persuasion, and a degree of cunning and manipulation- above all complete dedication to the task. The result is a living memory to commitment and example".

To CEDEP President, François Vachey, Claude was "a great Director General who wrote some of the most important pages in the history of CEDEP....A man of vision who identified closely with the needs of member companies, who foresaw what Executive Education could bring them...who was always innovative, developing new programmes and looking to the future as well as keeping a firm grip on the P&L sheet..- at once both businessman and an academic". Robin Hogarth, a longstanding associate and friend who first met Claude as a newly arrived Assistant Professor in 1972, also emphasised this duality, writing that; "Claude was a constant source of creative and original ideas about management and the social sciences and how these interacted with societal forces. Moreover, he applied these ideas creatively in designing and delivering many educational programmes for managers." Another old friend and ex-faculty member,

Jean-Claude Thoenig wrote of his "exceptional capacity to interview and understand what people referred to, an extraordinary skill at decoding quickly complex situations, making sense of weak signals and finding elegant solutions".

CEDEP was Claude's fiefdom and the perfect laboratory in which to put his ideas into practice. As Robin Hogarth explained; "Claude had his own vision about how organisations should work, and put many of his ideas to work successfully at CEDEP. The noted management writer Charles Handy could have easily taken his depiction of a 'Zeus' organisation and leadership style from observing how Claude managed. ...One time, however, I paid Claude a compliment that he did not fully appreciate. After he had just averted a difficult situation and made an impressive presentation to a CEDEP company, I remarked that he was 'a great salesman.' He didn't really like the connotation of the term 'salesman' but it captured the best aspects of his dealing with others: understand what they want and find ways to deliver it".

For HSBC's Mike Killingley, Claude was "a consummate operator" who "knew the pace at which CEDEP could adapt to changing needs and was adept at managing the interface with member companies". CEDEP GMP Alumnus, Michel Bauchot recalled how Claude quickly took CEDEP beyond its origins in "the great French groups", attracting new member companies from first Europe and then Asia. Tata Steel's Former Vice Chairman, B. Muthuraman too emphasized how "joining CEDEP was entirely due to Claude's effort. He travelled to India several times to get a better understanding of this would-be economic power. He was a great networker." L'Oréal's Tony Russell recalled how when the first participants arrived at the CEDEP campus for a new L'Oréal Asia Zone Programme Claude "with tears in his eyes, welcomed them warmly as if naturally part of his extended family...His own roots in Asia meant that he not only had an attachment to this particular programme, but that his many friends, colleagues and contacts in his extensive networks were treated as family members".

Claude as Mentor

For many of the faculty who came to teach at CEDEP, Claude was a much loved mentor. Prism's Edouard Demeire was one of several to write of "Claude's willingness to provide opportunities to young faculty.....making their first and sometimes difficult steps in Executive Education..". Jens Meyer recalled how "He was constantly – and I mean constantly - seeking new content and new people, charmed young and senior faculty to join and then did not stop stimulating them to do things others would not have dared. Claude was a source of inspiration for me and many of us but he cared for those around him as well".

François Vachey, too, underlined how Claude had

INSEAD Professor Jean Dermine recalled Claude's advice that "To succeed as a Professor you must enjoy – you must love – transmitting a message", while Bekaert's Stephaan Tacoen, a former member of the CEDEP Liaison Committee, remembered conversations with Claude that were "sometimes very formal, sometimes informal, trivial and at first glance, not so important. Yet

after some time it dawned on me that Claude had an important message to share about the importance and value of individual (management) education and above all the high impact of the 'masse critique' on organisational behaviour and importance, and hence the strategic task of HR".

Claude's empathy with outsiders like himself helped attract

mentored "many talented professors who owed Claude so much. He coached them, formed them, pushed them...and was extremely proud of them". Braddick noted that Claude "...built a first class faculty. He had the world-class resources of INSEAD at hand and scoured the world for others of equal quality. Many were called but few were chosen. Those that came forward were carefully interrogated and assessed, some were given a chance to work on a programme and even fewer were invited to become a regular member of the team. Once selected they became valued colleagues to be nurtured, encouraged and supported: even cosseted. They were given frank and honest feedback and were always involved in the evolution and development of the school. No wonder they were soon deeply committed, very often for the length of a career".

young faculty who did not fit snugly into the INSEAD mould. Professor

Wilfried Vanhonacker observed how; "He took in the 'homeless' INSEAD faculty, the rejects, and the oddballs. But he recognised quality in each of them, and could live with eccentric behavior as long as it brought value to his programmes". Former INSEAD Professor Soumitra Dutta wrote of how Claude "Welcomed me into the teaching portfolio at CEDEP and even though I struggled

the first few times, never gave up...I am grateful for his belief in me. I learned valuable lessons discussing how to adapt my teaching for specific client needs and he helped me to become a better professional". Martin Flash, an INSEAD Research Associate in 1976, also appreciated the way that "if Claude had confidence in you, he gave you his total backing".



Claude's Clan

Over time, many of these faculty came to form part of Claude's clan. As Jens Meyer remarked, "Once a Rat becomes your friend, you become part of their family or clan, and will be treated as such...That's what Claude offered to many of us: to be part of the Claude Michaud family, an offer and experience everyone who made up his close clan will always remember and thank him for". INSEAD Professor Ludo van den Heyden explained further: "One of his intellectual ambitions was to introduce the importance of managers in organisational theory and their clanic behaviour, something he could speak about as he practiced this in his own leadership behaviour at CEDEP". Vanhonacker wrote how: "I admired his commitment to CEDEP. He gave it everything he had, and more. It was a real home for him, and his character and joviality made it a home for many of us". Ludo van den Heyden similarly believed that; "Claude gave a lot to INSEAD, to CEDEP, and his friends. He received a lot in return". Loyalty was a word much used by the clan in connection with Claude.

A man of his time, Claude's club was of course exclusively male and characterised by "bonhomie and sharing a bottle", often chez Claude himself. Ludo van den Heyden recalled that: "Claude had a close circle of friends with whom he openly discussed his aims and goals. He would invite us to his home, where Françoise and him would be

Claude and Friendship, Wine and Fun...

However, what shone most clearly through the tributes that came in was the deep love and



most welcoming hosts...Claude would present us with some exquisite Burgundy wines he personally favoured...he always wished to bring 'his' touch to things". Françoise meanwhile, Ludo records, 'delighted us with her fabulous cooking'. As might be inferred, Claude's CEDEP was not so innovative when it came to the place of women.

But as Ludo came to realise while "It was very good to be part of the Michaud clan. It was less good to be outside". For inevitably every Rat has a darker side, one that could find expression in being perhaps vindictive, manipulative, selfish, cunning, ruthless or critical. Stubborn, "they generally prefer to live by their own rules rather than others, and although Rats find it easy to start a new relationship with someone, they also break off relationships easily". Such traits explain some of the fault lines that ran through Claude's character. Several who worked with him admitted that Claude was "not an easy person". He could, as Jens Meyer and others saw, be "stubborn and aggressive in his demands and his quest for flawless execution". This made Claude difficult to work for. In answer to Machiavelli's question about whether a leader should be loved or feared, Claude unhesitatingly came down on the side of the latter, as the CEDEP staff knew well. Others soon learned to beware of crossing the Rat, as any perceived disloyalty resulted in banishment from the clan, never to be re-admitted.

friendship many felt for Claude, and the way his personality drew people from different cultures to him. The words 'friendship' and 'fun' are not the words most often used in reminiscences about Directors of management institutions but in Claude's case, they dominated memories of him. For Michel Bauchot and many others, Claude was simply "mon ami". Marc Bertoneche saw Claude as close to an elder brother, a "mentor and undoubtedly one of my very best friends... We had a special 'connivence' or 'complicité,' as we would say in French. We shared similar values, similar backgrounds, a similar approach to life and a similar taste for good food and good wines...". Tata Steel's Muthuraman paid tribute to his Claude who, among many things was "a teacher, a guru, a Counsellor and above all, a friend who cared deeply for me and for my success".

Balanced Learning CEO Nigel Barrett recalled "Claude of the Ardèche – a friend advisor and confidante" as well as – taking up a running theme among those who spent time with Claude - "a fine sommelier." For L'Oréal's Tony Russell, Claude was "a mentor, an ally, a respected

colleague and a bon vivant” while Martin Flash wrote of Claude as “a man of ideas, convivial company and wide contacts”. Wilfried Vanhonacker recalled how “We had many dinners over the years at one of his favourite hangouts in Barbizon. A piece of “une blonde Aquitaine” meat was never too far away. He introduced me to the finer sides of French cuisine, politics, and culture. And over glasses of wine, we solved all the world’s problems”.

François Vachey described him as “un sacré bonhomme – a force of nature...a man with a big heart and a deep sense of loyalty. He loved life, to laugh, to be with friends...a phenomenon, a man far out of the ordinary”. Michel Bauchot came to realise that behind the Claude with the *gravitas* of his position, “those who knew him well were aware of his facetious side, and the sense of humour he tried to control”. Vanhonacker felt that part of Claude “remained a boy with a devious streak in him. He loved

Claude the Body-builder

Claude’s obsession with sports and physical exercise, which led him to install the famous Gym at CEDEP, were also strongly recalled. His passions ranged from ping pong – Pontus Troberg remembered battles that lasted hours – to football and rugby. Robin Hogarth recalled Claude as “a terrifying prop forward” in his playing days. Wilfried Vanhonacker described how his



friendship and relations with Claude developed “around the CEDEP gym which became a welcome reprieve for many INSEAD faculty looking for a venue to exercise, relax and have some down-to-earth conversations away from the academic corridors.... I quickly got the bug of bench pressing. And to my surprise, I was not too bad at it. With the bench being Claude’s passion, we got into a competition. Perhaps to this very day the scores are on

guns, fast cars etc. That uninhibited and playful part of his character made him a joy to be with even when mood swings got the better of him. He kept the world in perspective and loved a good practical joke”.

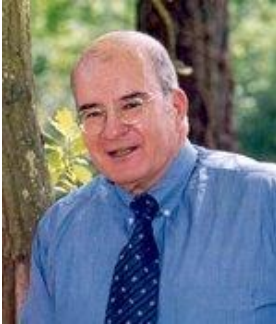
Jean-Claude Thoenig recalled how one night “..both of us sat in a bus just back from a dinner with several top world colleagues. Suddenly he started to quote by heart texts written by John Maynard Keynes and other great economists. It lasted for about thirty minutes. And he kept smiling throughout”. Former INSEAD Professor, Pontus Troberg, recounted how once “when I visited his house in the Ardèche mountains a tremendous fog came down while we were driving - and he asked me for directions, I who had never been there - “the blind asking the ignorant” - but we had lots of fun getting lost”.

the whiteboard in the basement... Ever the competitor and challenger, and in this particular way a carbon copy of Claude, I set out to beat his weight lifting record. I did well but never came close to what Claude lifted at his age”.

Claude tried to convert even the most unlikely candidates, as Marc Bertonèche and L’Oréal’s Ghyslaine Villain wrote. She remembered meetings over lunch or dinner during which Claude would vainly try to convince her of the benefits of sports, or walking through the forest guided by a compass. For Bertonèche, however, the gym was one place where their ‘complicité’ did not thrive; “I will always remember the first time I met Claude in 1975 at CEDEP. He showed me the whole place and we finished in his favourite place, his domain, “la salle de sports”. He looked at me and pulled something from an exercise machine, which seemed so easy I tried to do the same.....but in my case nothing happened, nothing moved, as I realised that there was a very heavy weight on the other side of the machine!! I will always remember his big smile and my humiliation.... “You have to train seriously” he added. I have to admit it’s the only time I didn’t follow his advice....”

For Soumitra Dutta, the Claude he remembered best was “Claude the Body-builder”. He recalled that Claude kept a written log of who was bench-pressing the maximum weight in the gym, and how proud he was of holding the record, “scoring over many others (like me) who were much younger than him. There in the gym I got to know the real Claude who was competitive, passionate, dedicated and yet childish and playful”.

So how to sum up Claude, this complex personality so dominant, influential and loved yet also fallible who, as several noted, liked to cultivate an air of mystery. Trying to describe Claude's many-sided *persona* Pascal Goachet, Honorary Consul to the USA, described how Claude "had a certain something extra that was difficult to put your finger on but which gave you a kind of vibration...the feeling of being in the presence of a man of many lives condensed into one – a Shiva with as many experiences as the God has arms". Robin Hogarth equally spoke for many when he wrote that "When I think of Claude, the words that come to my mind are: loyal friend, generosity, creative and innovative thinker, fun-loving, and practical. There are few 'Claudes' in this world. I was privileged to know him and be a friend".



Of the animal signs making up the Chinese zodiac the Rat holds the first position due, according to mythology, to its success in crossing a swift river ahead of the Cat (pushed into the water by the Rat en route) and the Ox, whom it out ran in order to reach heaven first at the summons of the Emperor. If there was any race to get to heaven, nobody who knew Claude would have bet against anyone but him being first to cross the line.

But perhaps the last word belongs best to his old friend Marc Bertonèche: "So long, Claude, Thank you for the wonderful and unforgettable times we spent at CEDEP. I miss you. Just send me a message, if you can, to tell me if there is an exercise room in Heaven, so that I can get prepared for when I see you again....."

July 2014