

A Tribute to Dan Gallin by Marty Chen, Co-founder and Emeritus International Coordinator of WIEGO

What can I say about Dan Gallin, my dear friend and respected colleague? He played so many roles for WIEGO and for me personally.

He was Brother Dan, the pioneering leader and intellectual historian of the international trade union movement. Under his leadership, the International Union of Food and Allied Workers (IUF) flourished. Ela-ben, Renana-ben and Mirai-ben highly value(d) his early recognition and steadfast support of SEWA.

He was Colleague Dan, the first director of WIEGO's Organization and Representation Programme. Where would WIEGO be without his leadership and guidance? I will always remember working with Dan, Renana Jhabvala and Biff Steel on WIEGO's "transition committee" in the early days of WIEGO – hammering out the WIEGO constitution and figuring out who qualified to be WIEGO institutional and individual members. Dan made sure that WIEGO remained accountable to our membership – especially the organizations and networks of informal workers: and instituted advisory committees, with informal worker representatives, for WIEGO programmes, beginning with ORP. And he was a leading supporter of the formation of HomeNet International and the International Domestic Workers Federation.

He was Gracious Host Dan who, with his beloved wife Joelle, welcomed countless WIEGO delegations to Geneva: hosting us at their home, the Auberge Communale de Carouge and many fine restaurants in Carouge.

He was Dan, the Connoisseur of Fine Things: of food and drink, the elegant mansion that houses the IUF, his silver rings and, above all, his beautiful wife Joelle.

He was Dan, the Drinking Buddy, who was always ready for a drink of wine or whiskey. I recall Dan and I sneaking a drink of whiskey in dry Ahmedabad. I also recall that WIEGO had to institute an alcohol policy as Dan and his buddy Dave Spooner had multiple drinks before, during and after WIEGO dinners.

He was also Curmudgeon Dan who didn't tolerate fools, monarchists, right wingers of any stripe and who remained true to, but sometimes stubborn about, his trade union values and perspective. I recall sitting next to him at the WIEGO General Assembly in Belo Horizonte, Brazil in 2010 when, during a session on waste pickers, street vendors and the city, it suddenly dawned on him that "the employer is not the enemy" for some groups of informal workers.

He was Special Friend Dan, who meant so much to me – and to so many others. He was a mentor and teacher from whom I learned so much. I was so delighted to discover that the two of us shared something in common from our pasts: the World Council of Churches and its commitment to ecumenism, justice and peace. Dan once took me to see the World Council of Churches headquarters in Geneva where both he and my father had worked in the 1950s.

How very fortunate we are that Dan believed in SEWA, WIEGO, the Nets and informal workers around the world.

With deep admiration for all Dan did during his legendary career. And with abiding love and affection for Dan as a friend and colleague. I will always treasure Dan's contributions to WIEGO and his presence in my life and work.

Marty Chen