

Looking back

Fred M. Snell, Editor 1967–1969

Professor, Department of Biophysics, State University of New York, Buffalo, New York 14214 USA

When I took over from Larry Oncley as Editor, the *Biophysical Journal* was still in its formative years. Although it had been established as a quality journal, it had not gained a distinctive reputation for any particular facet of the many that biophysics at that time represented. In many respects I felt that this was a virtue. To me, biophysics was not so much a separate scientific discipline unto itself, but a true interdisciplinary field. It impinged upon many other more established and recognized disciplines, bringing to them the more quantitative and analytic approaches. The interests among those who liked to call themselves biophysicists ranged widely from the molecular to the multi-species interactions of ecosystems. The x-ray crystallographer, the electron microscopist, and the macromolecular physical chemist each had their defined outlets. The emerging molecular biologists quickly defined theirs. Researchers at the cellular and organismic levels had the traditional and established physiology journals and biologists in the more classical fields had theirs.

As a consequence, or perhaps as a signal pointing to this state of the biophysics community, the manuscripts submitted to the Journal were quite variegated, representing a large number of different subject areas. It was my impression that many of the papers were submitted because they just didn't readily "fit" elsewhere. Many

tended to be unconventional, or perhaps they had just been rejected elsewhere and resubmitted in a last ditch effort to avoid "perishing." After all, the Journal had established itself as a very reputable refereed publication.

Another distinct impression that I gained during my tenure as editor was that the pressure to publish must have been enormous as was the competition to claim priority. Although many of the manuscripts were well-written, there were plenty that appeared to me to better represent a rough draft. It was as though the authors thought that after reviews they would have to revise anyway, so why not submit it in its present form. This aspect of editing was so distinct that many of you will remember my suggesting (with tongue in cheek) the establishment of a new journal to be called the *Journal of Unconfirmed New Knowledge*, in which the author(s) would be guaranteed publication of their manuscript as submitted, including all errors, for which they would accept full responsibility. Of course, such a journal would not have completely satisfied the "publish" aspect of academia.

Finally, I was impressed by the amount of cooperation I received from members of the Editorial Board and the many others solicited to review the manuscripts. Only once in a while was arm twisting necessary. In general, there was concurrence among the referees, and not very often did I have to resolve disputes. For this I was very grateful for it certainly made my task as Editor more enjoyable. My thanks to all of you.

Dr. Snell's current address is 9355 Sisson Highway, Eden, NY 14057.