

## A Salute to the Founding Editor, Robert W. Parry (1917–2006)

Chemistry is a story of science and the people who do it. As chemists, we contribute in different ways to our science and, through service, to how it gets done. In that light, I write with particular sadness of the passing of Professor Robert W. Parry of the University of Utah on December 1, 2006, at age 89 and reflect with both admiration and gratitude upon his many accomplishments in and for chemistry. Bob was the founding Editor of *Inorganic Chemistry* and a member of its Editorial Advisory Board for 17 years, as well as an Associate Editor for the *Journal of the American Chemical Society* and a former President of the American Chemical Society. Bob was an extraordinary person who served the chemistry community over the years with warmth, wit, wisdom, and distinction. His encouraging comments, smile, and enthusiasm, whether at a Gordon Conference, at an ACS Meeting, or wherever our paths crossed, were always for me personal and professional pleasures.

Bob was a member of that extraordinary cohort of individuals who received their education and training in the 1940s and 1950s under Professor John C. Bailar, Jr., at the University of Illinois. In the years following World War II, this group helped to define, and firmly put its stamp on, inorganic chemistry in America. Bob's research interests involved main group chemistry that was stimulated initially by the notion that coordinate covalence was an important part of such systems as the "diammoniate of diborane", boranocarbonates, and boranocarbamates. This work, in turn, led to many studies of nitrogen and phosphorus ligands with boron compounds and to other facets of phosphorus chemistry, including the discovery and development of low-coordinate phosphonium cations.

Below you will find excerpts from Bob's obituary in *Chemical and Engineering News*, December 11, 2006, p 13.

"Born in Ogden, Utah, Bob Parry grew up in Utah and graduated with a B.S. in Soil Chemistry in 1940 from Utah State Agricultural College (now Utah State University). He received a Masters degree from Cornell University in 1942 and a Ph.D. in Inorganic Chemistry under John C. Bailar, Jr. from the University of Illinois in 1946. Later that year, Bob joined the Chemistry Department at the University of Michigan, where he became a leader in inorganic chemistry. In 1969, he joined the faculty at the University of Utah as a Distinguished Professor of Chemistry, where he remained until his retirement in 1997 and then became Emeritus Professor.

His 60 year career combined excellence in education, research, service to the ACS, and advancement of the profession. Both at Michigan and Utah, Bob taught chemistry to thousands of undergraduates and he mentored over 60 Ph.D. students and postdoctoral fellows, many of whom

are now leaders in both academia and industry. He authored or co-authored 150 scientific publications in the areas of boron and main group chemistry and he was widely recognized as a pre-eminent boron chemist.

Bob served on the Executive Committee of the ACS Inorganic Division, chairing this committee in 1965. He was an ACS Councilor for over 40 years, a member of the ACS Board of Directors (1973–1983), and in 1982 served as President of the ACS. In addition to his extensive activities within ACS, for over 20 years, Bob was also active in various other organizations related to chemistry. He was a member of the Board of Trustees for the Gordon Research Conferences (1965–1972), including Chair of the Board of Trustees in 1968. Between 1980 and 1995, he served as executive secretary, chair, and councilor of the chemistry section of the AAAS. Likewise, between 1965 and 1982, Bob served in several capacities in IUPAC.

For his extraordinary accomplishments as an educator and his research distinctions, as well as his lifelong service to the profession of chemistry, Parry received numerous awards and honors. These include the ACS Award for Distinguished Service in Inorganic Chemistry (1965); Manufacturing Chemists Award for Excellence in the Teaching of College Chemistry (1972); ACS Award in Chemical Education (1977); Alexander von Humboldt Senior U.S. Scientist Award (1980, 1983); First Governor's Medal in Science, State of Utah (1987); Honorary Doctor's Degrees from Utah State University (1985) and the University of Utah (1997). These recognitions culminated in his receipt of the ACS Priestly Medal (1993)."

In preparing this Editor's page, I consulted with my good friend Professor Robert T. (Bob) Paine of the University of New Mexico, who was a student of Bob's at the University of Michigan in the late 1960s. Paine writes regarding Parry's selection as the first Editor of *Inorganic Chemistry*:

"Whatever the reason for his selection, Bob was the perfect choice. He had high scientific standards, unwavering integrity, and a great sense of fairness, attributes required of all journal editors and especially those in a founding situation. The story that I have uniformly heard from both past students and his Michigan faculty colleagues was that Bob refereed every single manuscript that was sent to the journal during its founding years, 1962–1964. Apparently he refereed not only the submitted manuscripts but also the reports submitted by the referees! This mode was still employed by Bob while he continued on as a member of the *Inorganic Chemistry* Editorial Board as well as an Associate Editor of *Journal of the American Chemical Society*. I do not know how he found time to do anything else but read papers, but he did and with a happy disposition. In that vein, I will add that, in the same time frame, he was also in charge of Freshman Chemistry instruction at the

University of Michigan, he consulted all over the place, and he had a research group of approximately 10 students. Furthermore, he found time for his family too. He was truly an amazing gentleman.”

Paine continues in his discussion of Parry’s inaugural editorial in the first issue of *Inorganic Chemistry*:

“That Editorial truly ‘sounds’ like Bob. In the right-hand column, he speaks clearly to the reader regarding the submission and refereeing processes and about the process of ‘paper selection’. Fairness was always a cornerstone with Bob. The next short paragraph says ‘... experimental descriptions must be clear, accurate and easily reproduced.’ He often told us, in a cautioning tone, in group seminars, ‘It is OK to make a mistake, just make sure you are the one to find it and correct it.’ This is why hardly anything was published from one student in his group before it had been reproduced by another student. This was frustrating for some, but I do not know of anything in print under R.W.P.’s authorship that was ever found to be experimentally wrong in any way.

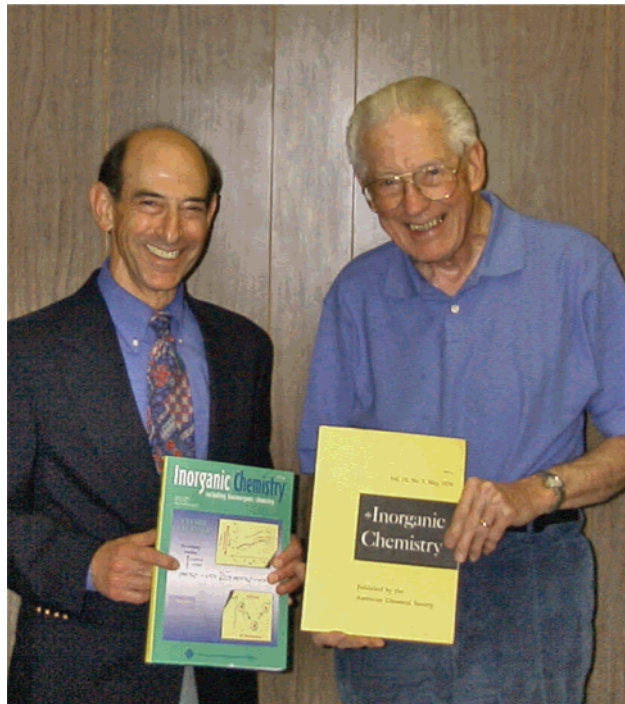
Another point emerges from the same paragraph that is truly Bob Parry. He wrote, ‘We would like papers to answer the question of ‘how’ as well as ‘why’. Theories change but quality experiments of science are eternal.’ To me, this says it all.”

Speaking for all of the editors of today’s *Inorganic Chemistry*, we can only aspire to maintain the high standards that Bob laid out.

On a visit to the University of Utah in 2002, Bob and I were asked to pose with copies of *Inorganic Chemistry* from our respective tenures. Professor Joel S. Miller was the photographer. The famous yellow cover in Bob’s hands is well-known to us as the means we used to greet unknown arrivals at airports and train stations. Bob was proud of how *Inorganic Chemistry* had grown over the years and how the journal stands as the best in its category for the reporting of new research results in inorganic chemistry and related fields.

We talked about how the field has evolved with substantial research footprints in subjects from biology and catalysis to materials and sensing.

Bob was a pleasure to know, and we will all miss him. We are truly grateful for his outstanding contributions to inorganic chemistry and for his friendship and guidance over the years.



**Richard Eisenberg**  
*Editor-in-Chief*

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