



ELSEVIER

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A Personal Forward

Editor's Note:

I had intended to write a standard forward for this issue with the standard explanations, thanks to contributors and nice words about Bob. When I put pen to paper, however (yes, I still do that!), somehow the following comments came out. Bob is a powerful presence still and he wouldn't let me get away with a plastic forward in HIS Special Issue.

I usually enjoy my editorial efforts on Special Issues, especially those issues where I am involved as Guest Editor. This issue, however, more than any other with which I have been involved, has tested my commitment and resolve. I didn't want to do it in the first place, not as a memorial issue. I wanted to do it in the fullness of time to celebrate Bob's career at a milestone of his life, like a 60th birthday or being elected to the National Academy of Sciences. I had to drag myself kicking and screaming into the issue, with my own paper (co-authored with Keith Jennings) being the last one accepted and these words being written after all other aspects of the issue had been completed. I thought that time would do its usual healing and refocusing thing but this time it hasn't, at least not for me, at least not yet.

There have been lots of good things that have happened. This issue has elicited an incredible response from Bob's colleagues in the scientific community. Before it had been decided a special issue would be published, I was deluged with requests for one by many of the authors of this volume. There was a question, at first, whether *IJMS* would do one since I and nine or ten others, had committed to contribute to a special issue of *JASMS* honoring Bob for winning the 1998 Biemann Medal of ASMS. Since that enterprise was ongoing it had to be established that the editors of that issue were not going to further expand it to a full-blown memorial issue. They decided not to. That set our gears in motion. Fellow guest editors Sue Graul, Hilikka Kenttämää, and I generated lists of people we thought might want to be involved, and especially those Bob would want to be

involved. As invitations went out, the word spread and numerous people wrote asking to be allowed to contribute. We were grateful for their forthrightness, as in almost all cases not including them had been oversights on our part. Several others that wrote surprised us as we hadn't realized how connected they were to Bob through his work. All in all, a stellar list of 54 contributions was assembled, many of them with multiple senior authors (like my own paper). And, except for my tardy paper that barely made it under the wire, the remaining 53 papers were enthusiastically submitted, reviewed, and accepted within the prescribed time window. It is the first time that 100% participation of initially committed authors to a special issue has occurred in my 14 years as editor of this journal!!

Much has been said and written about Bob, some of it by those closest to him. In this issue his post doc mentor Chuck DePuy contributes a short, but insightful piece. Hilikka Kenttämää also adds her reflections from her special place as Bob's wife, the mother of their children, and as his colleague and sounding board. Finally, Graham Cooks wrote "An Appreciation" of Bob in the *JASMS* Special Issue. Each of these helps remind us what a special person Bob was and, at least to me, showed sides of him that weren't apparent in his public persona. They all deserve to be read, and reread, and saved.

Like most of us, I had my own special relationship with Bob. He was tough, especially when discussing or defending his work! Since his work was always at the cutting edge, it often elicited strong reactions from

the community. Because one of my hats the past 12 yrs has been as an Associate Editor of the *Journal of the American Chemical Society (JACS)*, I usually saw what Bob considered his best work before others did, except for the reviewers. And they were anonymous but I wasn't! Now most of his work went sailing through, but not all of it. Not many letters are actually hot to the touch but more than one of Bob's was when he and the reviewers weren't in agreement. And my efforts at arbitration weren't always so well received either! I knew it was Bob's incredible passion for science and the fact he had squeezed the last bit of truth out of the experiment, that led to his, at times, searing intensity. At the time I was not sure I wanted to have the pleasure of sending on to him less than glorious reviews of a particular paper, but now I would give anything to still be involved with this dynamo as he rolled back the frontiers of chemistry. He raised the stakes. He radiated the value of science and always left me with the feeling that what I, what all of us, had committed our lives to was worth it.

And Bob was compassionate. At the NATO meeting at Mount St. Odille in 1990, two things were going on. Bob was wearing a hat indoors because he was recovering from chemotherapy during his first bout with the lymphoma that eventually took his life. At the same time I was struggling with some important personal issues that were getting the best of me. Bob was the one who did the comforting and cheer-leading, using his sometimes quirky sense of humor and his talents as a cartoonist to lift my spirits. He was in my corner and helped me refocus myself on dealing with the troubling issues, not being defeated by them. He took life head on and by his example helped me to do the same.

Bob was committed. His commitments to science and to excellence are legendary. But he was equally committed to other aspects of his life. I first realized this early in my relationship with him when I attended his wedding in his parents' back yard in Los Angeles. Hilikka, as most of you know, is Finnish. And Bob, to his credit and my surprise, had learned enough Finnish so that he and Hilikka could exchange vows in that

language. That may not seem like much but Finnish is an isolated language, not connected in any known way to major language roots, and sometimes has words that seem paragraphs long! Anyone who attended the International Mass Spectrometry Conference in Tampere in 1997 knows what I mean.

I knew something was seriously wrong when Bob had to withdraw as the invited after-dinner speaker at the Lake Arrowhead Meeting of January, 1998. In his letter to me in December he indicated he was undergoing a "temporary" relapse and couldn't guarantee he'd be okay in time for the meeting. This set off all sorts of warning bells in me, and my instinctive response was to try to hang on to him, to help him fight for his life. An opportunity soon presented itself in an unexpected way. At the church I attend they have a lovely ceremony at the midnight service on Christmas Eve. At the end of the service each person lights a candle and the remaining lights are extinguished. You then offer a prayer of intercession for a particular person as your candle burns down. I found myself praying for Bob that night, an experience that surprised me with its intensity and depth. I became very aware of Bob's presence and God's love for him. This feeling stayed with me for days until I finally decided to e-mail Bob and tell him about it. His response was pure Bob—I could visualize those penetrating eyes as he e-mailed back to thank me and said he knew he could count on me to be there when he needed me, an unusual concession from one so fiercely independent. However, I could tell from the way he phrased it he was already back in the saddle, pushing the cancer to the background and getting on with the business of his life. He never quit. Never. And he still hasn't quit as his example and spirit still motivate me to go on, to do better work, to raise my standards to meet his, to live every moment. Thanks for being in my life, Bob; thanks for being in all of our lives.

Mike Bowers
Santa Barbara, CA
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