

IN MEMORIAM

Jean Rouxel (1935–1998)

As the materials chemistry community already knows, Jean Rouxel died suddenly in the spring of 1998. Eulogies have appeared in several journals for which Jean was board member and/or an active contributor. This small tribute adds some personal reflections to honor the memory of a colleague who was also a friend. His death was a great shock to all of us for many reasons. Certainly by today's standards he was at best middle aged and as vigorous as ever, especially scientifically. So part of our shock is that he died so suddenly and so much in his prime.

Jean's interest in the chemistry and physics of low-dimensional solids led to an amazing number of discoveries. What else would have come, if he had lived? He always shared his ideas. He was much more interested in what the experiments told us than in claiming any credit for the accomplishments. When he explained some new idea or discovery, it was always clear and elegant. Once explained, one could think it so obvious that someone else should have already done or explored this. But this was not often the case. He took such joy in this inventing and discovery process, in seeing ideas nurtured and developed! He infected those around him with this same excitement and in so doing attracted creative colleagues to work with him. Eventually, an entire institute was founded by Jean, the Institute of Materials in Nantes (IMN). The IMN is now a flourishing institute of more than two hundred people pursuing the chemistry and physics of solids. Many visitors still come as postdocs, or to give seminars, or to spend sabbatic leaves etc. So Jean leaves a unique and living legacy of his scientific passion. We shall miss his openness and leadership.

Jean was not only dedicated to science; he was also devoted to his colleagues, friends, and family. His main concern as head of IMN was the welfare of the people working there, be they the secretaries, technicians, engineers, or academics. He worked tirelessly to enable and encourage them to do their best, and especially to do the best research, in the university, in CNRS, and globally. This was all done by his own good example and with fairness, humanity, and humility. Jean interacted with a large number of scientists worldwide and the same character apparent to his colleagues at IMN was apparent to all. In other words, he had only one face, a feature not very common to our species. His mild manner and his concern for everyone else was evident in even his smallest interactions. This was a gift that we all shared and felt welcomed by. We shall miss his charisma.

When Jean traveled, especially to the United States, he often would bring one of his five children. This was a chance for each of them to see other parts of the world. Jean believed that increased communication, especially through visits that included direct experience with families, would lead to world peace and understanding. He saw science as a unique and natural vehicle to lead the way. It was delightful to get to know him and his family during these visits and of course during return visits to Nantes. We will always remember those exchanges and we shall miss his example and company.

Obviously, Jean cannot be fully described by any one person. He touched us all. Each of us could add to the story. He was gifted in many exceptional ways. Perhaps

the best we can do in remembering him is to first aspire to leave as positive a human legacy as he has done, and second, as scientists, to grow to have as wide and as penetrating a scientific vision as was his. If we succeed, his memory will continue in our accomplishments and thus be passed to future generations.

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