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Tribute for J. Michael Schurr

This special issue of The Journal of Physical Chemistry B honors Professor J. Michael "Mickey" Schurr on the occasion of his retirement from the Department of Chemistry at the University of Washington. Mickey is a dedicated scientist of the highest caliber, and his contributions to our field will be missed. Mickey sustained a thriving research program for over 40 years and made seminal contributions to the field of DNA biophysics. His contributions as an educator and mentor were enormous, not only in the training of graduate students, postdoctoral researchers and colleagues who were willing to listen, but also in the undergraduate classroom. In the years after the pain of his undergraduate physical chemistry class had worn off, the more astute students appreciated the rigorous foundation that course provided. Former students and postdoctoral fellows, along with scientific colleagues gathered to celebrate Mickey's contributions in a symposium held September 18th, 2007. Many of the articles collected here to honor Mickey grew out of the presentations made at that symposium.

Mickey approached his research with tireless effort and an obsession for scientific truths. He had no tolerance for flashy, unsubstantiated, or oversimplified results. No shortcuts were allowed in his own research, or tolerated in the efforts of others. He possesses a highly impressive breadth and depth of knowledge of physical chemistry and chemical physics. His work on the dynamics of DNA secondary and tertiary structures was comprised of a mixture of extremely difficult experiments that probed elusive structural, dynamic, mechanical and solvation properties of the molecule, along with original rigorous theoretical analysis and interpretation.

Mickey was a tough but patient and encouraging mentor who taught by example. He taught that science is hard but also fun work. He was always ready to articulate details of technically difficult topics with clarity, insight, and inspiration. It was uncommon to have a brief conversation with Mickey as he was rarely without an opinion on any of a number of topics. Many of his students, postdocs, and colleagues will surely attest that much was learned by spontaneous talks with Mickey in the hallways of Bagley hall. Whether in the hallways, his office, or the laboratory, he was always available for advice, consultation, and commentary.

Mickey was selfless and often sought no credit for his contributions to others. In his role as a peer reviewer, he

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oftentimes went far beyond just supplying perfunctory critiques to instead providing critical, insightful advice. If he encountered mistakes or oversights, he would take the time to educate the authors and in many cases explicitly show them the errors of their ways. He always provided constructive criticism to help people get on track and make an accurate significant contribution. Sometimes despite the best intentions this could be quite intimidating. For the past few decades at Biophysical Society meetings, there has been no more fearful sight than Mickey heading for the microphone during the question session of a presentation. The experience could be petrifying if you were the speaker and the fear of having to cope with a deeply probing question that he was going to ask could be debilitating. However, Mickey's enquiries were always well intentioned and aimed at getting deeper toward the truth. Mickey's interrogations were particularly designed to help students. In the university seminars, he would always ask (at least) two questions: one for himself and another for the students.

We will miss Mickey's continued scientific contributions. This issue is a tribute to Mickey's impact and his legacy as it will continue through those of us he has expertly trained and so profoundly influenced. None of us can do it as well as Mickey, but because of his inspiring example we are driven to try.

Albert S. Benight
Jonathan B. Chaires

Guest Editors

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