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Foreword



The history of *Biochemical and Biophysical Research Communications* (BBRC) goes back a long time to 1959, when the venerable Academic Press published the first issue of the Journal. Those were happy days for biochemistry and biophysics; funding was plentiful, great discoveries were being made, enthusiasm was everywhere. The appearance of the new journal, with the blue-and-black cover many certainly still remember, with the emphasis on speed of publication, with the camera-ready typographical layout, and the Editorial Board full of eminent figures who helped shape the history of the field, was something really impressive and innovative. Those were the pre-impact factor days, when people even published important original research—can anybody believe it?—in Symposia Proceedings. And of course the idea of online publication and open access journals was thousands of miles away from anybody's mind.

Those were also the days when a young man named Bill Lennarz was deciding to become a biochemist; a wise decision, in hindsight, for both him and the field of biochemistry. Which is why, in part, I am contributing to this issue that celebrates the career of Bill Lennarz, a man who played a very important role in the history and development of BBRC.

My first encounter with Bill goes back to the days of Johns Hopkins nearly 50 years ago. He had just arrived there as a young Assistant Professor in the Department led by Al Lehninger, which I had also just joined as a European Postdoctoral Fellow. The Department was one of the “cathedrals” of Bioenergetics worldwide that, along with five or six similar laboratories, from Stockholm, to Wisconsin, to Amsterdam, to Philadelphia, to UCLA, joined in the frantic search for the “Holy Grail” of biochemistry at that time: the mythical high energy intermediate of oxidative phosphorylation; the now famous “squiggle”. Of course the domineering figure in the Department was Al Lehninger, with whom a large number of postdocs from all over the world were working. All of them busied themselves with various aspects of the oxidative phosphorylation problem, and I was one of them. We were the “phosphorylators” and we felt we had a noble mission causing us to, at times, look down our noses at the other guys on the fifth floor, who were not working on mitochondria, but busied themselves mostly with problems of lipid biochemistry. They were the “grease” people, as we used to call them, and Bill, fresh from Konrad Bloch's Laboratory, was one of them. We phosphorylators did not

suspect that in a short while we would all be swept away by an unknown guy working somewhere in England armed only with a second-hand pH meter, whereas Bill and the other “grease” people went onto solve problem after problem in areas that were not even related to lipids anymore.

Bill eventually moved into glycobiology and the exciting area of fertilization, taking him physically away from Johns Hopkins first to Texas and then to Stony Brook, where he remains today. Bill and I had become good friends in spite of the phosphorylators/grease people issue, and we had kept in touch throughout our respective peregrinations. Years later BBRC brought us together again when, at the end of the 1970s, Jean Pierre Ebel had signed me up for the Editorial Board, and in 1985 I asked Bill to join it as well. He accepted, and became the Chief Editor, initiating a period of leadership that strengthened the Journal, opening it to areas that had been previously neglected, and extending its appeal and popularity to countries such as China which had been, up until then, on the margins of science. BBRC thus owes Bill a great debt of gratitude, and this Special Issue is but a small token of appreciation for all that he has done.

When BBRC appeared on the scene its emphasis on speed of publication rapidly made it very popular. It became a favorite vehicle for the communication of important findings, and even after the appearance of other journals with similar characteristics it remained a place where some very important “firsts” kept appearing, including the ten most highly cited articles in BBRC's history which are reprinted in this Special Issue. These articles signify a remarkable accomplishment for BBRC as articles published in “quickies” tend to not be highly cited. Even more remarkably, BBRC has published a number of seminal papers that may not have high citation numbers, but which have been immensely important for the development of biochemistry/biophysics. We have chosen to reprint two of them as examples: a paper by Yasutomi Nishizuka et al. describing the stimulation of protein kinase C by diacyl glycerol, and the first paper ever published on ubiquitin by Aaron Ciechanover, who recently told me that he considers this paper the most important he has ever published.

BBRC has made many important strides under the directive of Bill Lennarz. As we all know, times are changing and this change is bringing new advancements, the most significant being the advent and proliferation of online publication. Thus, in a sense, the retirement of Bill Lennarz marks the end of an era. A new one is advancing, and promises to be both challenging and exciting, and, as ever, BBRC is ready to meet the challenge.

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