

## Editorial: A Tribute to Bruce Merrifield

This issue of *Biopolymers: Peptide Science* is dedicated in the memory of Professor Bruce Merrifield who died on May 14, 2006, at his home in Cresskill, New Jersey. The outpouring of tributes in scientific journals, at the meetings of peptide societies throughout the world, and in the popular press are a testimony to the profound impact that Merrifield's invention of chemical synthesis on solid support has had on today's science. Solid phase peptide synthesis (SPPS) opened new possibilities to solve scientific problems, brought the field of peptide chemistry within the reach of other scientific disciplines, and facilitated the interactions between peptide chemists and scientists with diverse research and medical interests. Bruce Merrifield's invention holds a unique place in the history of 20th century science. Merrifield's path to SPPS was summarized by Dr. William Agosta during the presentation of the degree of Doctor of Science, *Honoris Causa*, awarded by the Rockefeller University in 1998: "In chemistry as elsewhere, it is one thing to have a novel idea and another to reduce it to practice. Famous chemists nearly always confine themselves to the pleasure of generating ideas and then depend on younger colleagues to make them work. Over a period of 3 years, Merrifield made his idea work by himself."

This issue brings together the scientific contributions and recollections from Merrifield's coworkers in his laboratory, colleagues from the Rockefeller University, and scientists who interacted with Bruce Merrifield at different stages of his long career, as well as original articles and reviews from the younger generation of peptide chemists who are expanding the concept of SPPS in new directions. The issue is divided into several sections. Included are copies of the first three handwritten pages of the May 26, 1959, entry in the laboratory notebook where Bruce Merrifield describes the concept of SPPS. The notebook entry is followed by Bruce Merrifield's biography written by Arthur M. Felix, a bibliography of all of Bruce Merrifield's published work, and Alexander R. Mitchell's article "Bruce Merrifield and SPPS: A Historical Assessment." The second part consist of "Personal Reflections" and "Remembering Bruce Merrifield" sections contributed by peptide scientists across the globe, while the third part of the issue is devoted to scientific articles and reviews.

The historical assessment article by Alexander Mitchell is adapted from his presentations at the Merrifield Memorial Symposia held at the Rockefeller University on November 13, 2006, and at the 20th American Peptide Society Symposium held in Montreal on June 26, 2007. The articles by Arthur Felix, John Stewart, Garland Marshall, Bernd Gutte, and David Andreu in the "Personal Reflections" section are adapted from their presentations at the Merrifield Memorial Symposium held at the Rockefeller University on November 13, 2006.

The themes in "Personal Reflections" and "Remembering Bruce Merrifield" sections overlap each other and convey the spirit of the Merrifield group. Contributions in the "Personal Reflections" section describe both the scientific endeavors and the personal interactions between Bruce Merrifield and his coworkers and colleagues, while the "Remembering Bruce Merrifield" section displays more of a personal sentiment. In many ways these two sections complement Bruce Merrifield's scientific autobiography "Life During a Golden Age of Peptide Chemistry" published in 1993, in which he describes his beginnings in science, his invention of SPPS, the early attempts to develop his idea into a workable method, and the successes and set-backs that followed, all placed in the context of personal and professional interactions with his coworkers and colleagues. In the "Personal Reflections" and "Remembering Bruce Merrifield" sections of this issue, members of Bruce Merrifield's group and his colleagues, many of whom worked alongside him at the bench, give their perspectives on the life and science in the laboratory, and several of them describe some of the same events mentioned in the autobiography.

Throughout all the stages of the preparation of this issue we received enthusiastic help from many members of the Merrifield group as well as Carol Moberg, a science historian at the Rockefeller University. Arthur Felix, Elizabeth Merrifield, Alexander Mitchell, and Cecilia Unson were instrumental in the preparation of the Bibliography. We are especially indebted to Cecilia Unson for her help, advice, and insights. As the contributions in this issue demonstrate, Bruce Merrifield during his long career set an example and influenced generations of scientists. He also had a profound impact on many young people who worked in his laboratory and later went on to diverse careers. He left a personal legacy well beyond his groundbreaking invention of SPPS.

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