

## Tribute to Bernie Gilula

I met Bernie through our mutual friend Dan Goodenough and through Bessie Huang a colleague in the cell motility field. I was so impressed with Bernie and Bessie and their work, they were among the first colleagues I tried to attract to the new Department of Cell Biology at Johns Hopkins Medical School in the late 1970's. I always regretted that it did not work out.

Nevertheless, I had the privilege of serving as Associate Editor of *The Journal of Cell Biology* during the first seven of Bernie Gilula's 16 years as Editor-in-Chief of *The JCB*. Those were pivotal times for *The JCB*. Just a few years before, the scientists on the JCB Editorial Board recommended that working scientists be given the responsibility to manage the journal rather than the professional staff at The Rockefeller University Press. With some reluctance this transition was approved. The success of this experiment depended on appointment of just the right leader for *The JCB*.

The decision to appoint the 39-year-old Bernie Gilula as Editor-in-Chief was daring but wise. Daring to ask a young person to take on a major responsibility, but wise since Bernie brought such enthusiasm, wisdom, and vision to the job. Wise because Bernie had the youth required for a long-term commitment to the success of *The JCB*. Wise because Bernie possessed a personal and scientific maturity far beyond his years. Even as a graduate student and young faculty member, he had a deep understanding of his own specialty, cellular communication, as well as much of the rest of cell biology, and a clear vision of where the science was headed. Wise because even the young Bernie had remarkably good taste for quality research and a gentle touch when it came to dealing with work that did not yet measure up to his standards.

Bernie's leadership skills and power of persuasion made it easy for Günter Blobel, Joe Gall, Lewis Glaser, Hal Weintraub, Kai Simons, and me to join him as Associate Editors. We Associate Editors had well-defined

areas to cover. That left all of the rest of cell biology to Bernie, who took more than his share of papers. We worked out a system that is used still today. One of us screened each newly submitted manuscript and either handled its review ourselves or passed it on to a member of the Editorial Board to manage. Bernie had us flag manuscripts that appeared inappropriate in one way or another for *The JCB*. We then asked another member of the Board to review those manuscripts quickly themselves and to return them to us for rapid disposition. The goal was to return inappropriate manuscripts to the authors within two weeks, so they could submit the work elsewhere without further delay. We handled about half of the papers this way, allowing Editorial Board members and reviewers to focus on papers with at least a 50% chance of ultimate acceptance. Although an editorial rejection can be hard to take, this rapid editorial screening was a compassionate way to make the system work better. A few authors even thanked us for the rapid responses. This editorial review process reflected Bernie's concern for his fellow scientists and his way of moving things forward as painlessly as possible.

Managing all of those manuscripts (Bernie handled 350 to 400 each per year) was a big job, but we took pride in the high quality of the work that appeared in *The JCB*. Making judgments about the work of friends and colleagues on a daily basis can be a thankless task. Bernie was a master at conveying respect for the authors and their work even if the paper itself was not acceptable for publication in *The JCB*. When Bernie retired as Editor-in-Chief of *The JCB* he received official thanks for his 16 years of service, but unfortunately most of the authors who wanted to thank him personally for his monumental contribution to our field never had a chance to do so.

For more than 30 years *The JCB* was edited in association with the American Society for Cell Biology

(ASCB). This collaboration between the Society and the Editorial Board was remarkably successful in appointing outstanding Editorial Board members. Bernie and our Associate Editors group hoped for closer association with the Society. The Society even offered to purchase *The JCB* from The Rockefeller University, since we expected that Society ownership would allow greater freedom for innovation and growth. Sadly, *The JCB* and the Society ultimately drifted apart—a bitter disappointment for Bernie. Nevertheless, he kept his hand strongly on the helm and guided *The JCB* to its present prominence independent of the ASCB but with the participation of many ASCB members on the Board.

Bernie's passing brought forth much well-deserved praise for his character, leadership, scientific accomplishments, and service to the community of cell biologists. Those of us who had the pleasure to know him will also remember Bernie as a jock, family man, and warm friend. His playful side was revealed by his jovial smile, ready laugh, and unflinching good humor. I appreciated his child-like fascination with gadgets, be they golf putters or the shiny black Mercedes sports car that he acquired a couple of years ago. In his usual understated way, Bernie told me that he didn't really mean to buy it, but the dealer was more or less giving them away to meet a sales quota at the end of the year, so he brought one home. Like a kid in the proverbial candy store he reveled in showing me the voice activate car phone and the sure handling around tight corners. He even convinced me to try a few tight corners in his toy myself. The last time that I saw Bernie just a few weeks before he died, he waved to me from his black chariot and flashed that big smile. It is a nice way to remember a pillar of our community and genuine friend.

By Thomas D. Pollard, The Salk Institute for Biological Studies, Structural Biology Laboratory, La Jolla, CA 92037. E-mail: pollard@salk.edu