



## ALFRED E. MIRSKY

1900–1974

ALFRED EZRA MIRSKY was born in the City of New York on October 17, 1900. He joined The Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research in 1927 and became a Member of the Institute in 1948. During the 1950's he played an important role in the transformation of the Institute into The Rockefeller University. His presence at the Institute and his lifelong interest in the chemistry of proteins and of chromosomes early brought him into close contact with the editors of *The Journal of General Physiology*. It was natural, therefore, that he should have been asked to assist in the editing of the Journal when, in 1951, W. J. V. Osterhout's advancing years made that task overly taxing for him. Mirsky's many scientific achievements will be noted and praised in other eulogies written by persons far better qualified than I to discuss those achievements. I would like to note here the fact that it was Mirsky who was responsible for shaping *The Journal of General Physiology* into its modern form.

To explain the special importance of Alfred Mirsky's place in the history of the Journal, it is necessary to look back at its earlier tradition. From its founding in 1918 until 1924, the Journal was edited by Jacques Loeb and W. J. V. Osterhout. From 1924 to 1946 only three names appear on the masthead, those of Osterhout, W. J. Crozier, and John H. Northrop. The name of Wallace O. Fenn appears in 1946 and no other names appear until 1951 when those of L. R. Blinks and A. E. Mirsky were added. Throughout the period from 1918 to 1951 each article was read by each editor and was accepted or declined by the common consent of the entire board. One member of the board acted as editor-in-chief: initially Loeb, later Osterhout, and eventually Mirsky.

In 1951 Mirsky thus, in effect, became editor-in-chief of the Journal, a position he held until 1961. He soon perceived that the increasing specialization of modern science required a more complex system of reviewing than had previously been available. It was characteristic of Mirsky's thorough and intelligent approach to any problem that he made no immediate changes but spent many hours examining the policies of other journals, seeking the advice of colleagues who were editors and reviewers, and carefully designing a new structure for the management of the Journal. Although Detlev Bronk and Frank Brink joined the board at Mirsky's invitation in 1954 and 1956, it was not until 1958 that the board was decisively enlarged by the appointment of six new members in various fields. Only in 1960 did Mirsky's name appear as editor, followed by the names of three associate editors and an editorial board with 12 members.

The masthead of the issue of September, 1960 signals the completion of Mirsky's skillful transformation of the Journal into the form that it has maintained ever since. Mirsky soon thereafter relinquished the title of editor to C. M. Connelly but he remained on the board as a member or as honorary editor until his death. Mirsky's association with *The Journal of General Physiology* spanned his entire professional career, having begun with the appearance of an article in the issue for November, 1925 (M. L. Anson and A. E. Mirsky. On Some General Properties of Proteins. *J. Gen. Physiol.* **9**:169–179).

In 1967, Detlev Bronk invited Mirsky to become an Honorary Editor of the Journal. Mirsky replied:

Dear Det,

To be an Honorary Editor of The Journal of General Physiology is indeed an honor. This has been a great journal and one intimately associated in many ways with the University and with my own life. And so I am delighted to have a continuing place on its editorial board.

With warm thanks,

Ever yours,  
Alfred

This long and intimate association was ended by the death of Alfred Mirsky on June 19, 1974. We hope that the Journal to which he gave so much will continue to be worthy of his devotion to it.

PAUL F. CRANFIELD